

THE ATTITUDE OF EDMUND BURKE (1729-1797)
TOWARD CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCHES

By

Joseph E. McCabe
A. B., M. A., B. Th., M. Th.

A Thesis Submitted To The Faculty Of Divinity
Of
The University Of Edinburgh

In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements For
The Degree Of
Doctor Of Philosophy



1 May 1951

Joseph E. McCabe



To
Brandt,

Who was two-going-on-three
When this study was undertaken,
With the hope that my examiners will not
Find it necessary to employ his favorite expression,

"Do it again Daddy!"

PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to bring to light the attitude of Edmund Burke (1729-1797) toward Christianity and the churches. Burke's impact on eighteenth century politics, and his rank as a philosopher, have been the subjects of many specialized studies, as well as being essential to any comprehensive view of the century in which he was such a power. However, there exists no adequate treatment of his religious thought, and it is the centrality of that theme which justifies this investigation of his life and works.

In the first chapter I have attempted to set forth a brief sketch of Burke's life. Some twelve or more biographies have already appeared, and it is obviously impossible to box the compass of his many-sided life in so short a space. However, I have been guided in this first chapter by the central purpose of the study, that is, I have attempted to call attention to the religious aspect of his speeches and writings within the larger framework of the chief events of his lifetime. The examination of the Wentworth Woodhouse Manuscripts at Sheffield and the Milton Manuscripts at Lamport Hall yielded some most interesting biographical data not hitherto published, and I have incorporated some of that material in this introductory chapter.

The second chapter will carry the reader into the heart of the thesis. Here I set down Burke's attitude toward the major religious problems toward which he turned his prolific mind, together with an appraisal of his personal religion and integrity. The original work in this chapter has a two-fold aspect. First, I have endeavoured to bring together for the first time, from all Burke's published works and correspondence, the essential material on these themes. Secondly, the investigation of hundreds of Burke's hitherto unpublished letters, and his private notebooks, has made possible a fresh and comprehensive assise of his religious thought.

The third chapter deals with Burke's political thought. Here I am of course indebted to all those who have so carefully and adequately set forth his political philosophy. Any claim to originality in this chapter is derived from the delineation of the religious presuppositions which Burke brought to the affairs of state. That Burke held such presuppositions has long been common knowledge; I simply document the proposition and endeavour to show how integral was his religious thought to his political philosophy.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters are concerned with Burke's attitude toward The Established Church, The Dissenting Churches, and The Roman Catholic Church, respectively. There was little to be said of his

attitude toward the establishment that had not already been recorded; hence chapter four is the shortest in the study. In the chapter on Dissent, however, I attempt to trace Burke's transition from a position of champion to that of cool detachment and then vigorous opposition. In the study of the Roman Catholic Church there is some hitherto unpublished material which sets into sharper focus his concern and lifelong sympathy, not only for Catholic Emancipation, but for the Roman Catholic Church as such.

Dr. Johnson once said of Burke, "That man challenges all my powers." In pursuing this study, the sheer immensity of the task has from time to time been quite daunting. Nevertheless, it is a pleasure to record that Burke's thought, far from losing its interest, has held for me a growing fascination.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness, and to express my sincere thanks, to my advisers, the Rev. Professor John H. S. Burleigh and Professor Richard Pares. They have been generous in giving of their time, severe in criticism, and at every turn of the way, cordially helpful. I am also indebted to the Very Rev. Principal John Baillie, who first awakened my interest in Burke, and who encouraged me to undertake this study of the specifically religious aspect of his life and thought.

To the library staffs of New College, of the National Library, and of the University Library, I will have an abiding sense of indebtedness. Those charged with the responsibility for the Wentworth Woodhouse Manuscript Collection and the Milton Manuscript Collection were most gracious to me during my stay at Sheffield and at Lamport Hall in Northamptonshire for the purpose of investigating those invaluable sources. Professor R. B. McDowell of Trinity College was most helpful when I was doing research in Dublin. Librarians at the British Museum, at Princeton University, and at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City made available to me the Burke manuscripts in their respective libraries.

Members of the staff at the National Library of Ireland in Dublin, the Clements Library at the University of Michigan, and the Library of Congress in Washington traced Burke manuscripts untiringly. Professor T. W. Copeland of the University of Chicago, a ranking Burke scholar, lent his interest to the study and patiently guided me to sources of Burke's correspondence, on which subject he is an authority. To all these, and to many others who aided in the tedious but rewarding task of research, I wish to express my profound gratitude.

Finally, to borrow a phrase from Burke, I
acknowledge "first, last, and foremost" the untiring
patience of my wife, and the lively interruptions of
my son Brandt, the two people I know will consider
my little endeavours worthy of note.

Edinburgh, Scotland
1 May 1951.

Joseph E. McCabe

CONTENTS

| Chapter | Page |
|--|------|
| I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF EDMUND BURKE (1729-1797)..... | 1 |
| II. BURKE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD CHRISTIANITY... | 50 |
| A. Introduction To Burke's Religious Thought. | |
| B. Burke's Attitude Toward Deism And The Role of Reason. | |
| C. The Religious and Sinful Nature of Man. | |
| D. The Bible, Its Nature and Authority. | |
| E. The Wedding of Religion With Morality and Duty. | |
| F. Burke's Views on Toleration. | |
| G. Providence in History, An Assured Conviction Not Subjectively Appropriated. | |
| H. Judgment and Immortality. | |
| I. Burke's Personal Religion and Integrity. | |

CONTENTS (Cont'd.)

| Chapter | Page |
|--|------------|
| <p>III. THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF BURKE AS INFORMED BY HIS RELIGIOUS FAITH.....</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">A. Burke's Place In The History Of Political Thought And His Religious Frame of Reference.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">B. The Primacy of Conservatism.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">C. Burke's Attitude Toward Change.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">D. Circumstances, Prudence, and Expediency.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">E. The Place of Abstract Theories and Rights.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">F. The Spiritual Nature of The State And The Theistic Ground of All Law.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">G. The Relation of Church and State.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">H. The Natural Aristocracy.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">I. Political Obligation Based on Responsibility To God.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">J. The Extension Of The Principle of Political Obligation To The Empire.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">K. Burke's Humanitarian Motifs Grounded In Religious Faith.</p> | <p>107</p> |
| <p>IV. THE ATTITUDE OF BURKE TOWARD THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.....</p> | <p>175</p> |
| <p>V. THE ATTITUDE OF BURKE TOWARD THE DISSENTING CHURCHES.....</p> | <p>186</p> |
| <p>VI. THE ATTITUDE OF BURKE TOWARD THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.....</p> | <p>203</p> |
| <p>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</p> | <p>222</p> |

CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

This chart will be of little value to careful students of the eighteenth century. However, for anyone who comes to this study without a thorough knowledge of the century, it will serve as a rough guide to the events of the period under consideration.

The titles which are underscored are of course Burke's, while most of the references to him in the chart are developed in some detail in the main body of the thesis.

1729.....Burke born in Dublin, January 12.

1735-1740...Burke in County Cork with Roman Catholic relatives.
...He attends a Catholic village school.

1741-1744...School days in the Quaker community of Ballitore.

1744-1749...Burke at Trinity College, Dublin.
...The Historical Society formed.
...The Reformer.
...Tracts On The Lucas Controversy.

1750.....Burke goes to London to study law at the Middle Temple.
...The lure of a literary career.
...Five years of obscurity follow.

1756.....A Vindication Of Natural Society.

1757.....Burke marries Jane Nugent.
...An Inquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas On The Sublime And Beautiful.

1758.....Abridgment Of English History.
...An Account Of The European Settlements In America. (with William Burke).
...Burke's son Richard born.

- 1759...The Annual Register.
...Burke meets William Gerard Hamilton.
- 1760...Burke returns to Ireland as Hamilton's private secretary.
...He begins series of tracts on Penal Laws.
...Accession of George III.
- 1764...Burke returns to London with Hamilton.
...The Literary Club with Johnson, Reynolds, etc.
- 1765...Burke breaks with Hamilton.
...He becomes private secretary to Lord Rockingham.
...Enters parliament as member for Wendover.
...Parliament passes the Stamp Act.
...Fall of Grenville.
...The First Rockingham Ministry.
- 1766...The Declaratory Act.
...Repeal of The Stamp Act.
...Fall of Rockingham.
...Burke begins long years in opposition.
...The Grafton Ministry.
...Short Account Of A Late Administration.
- 1767...Chatham's illness.
...Tax on American imports.
- 1768...Burke purchases The Gregories at Beaconsfield.
...Re-election of Wilkes.
...Rioting in St. George's Fields.
...Revenue acts resisted in Massachusetts.
- 1769...Observations On A Late Publication On The Present State Of The Nation.
...Letters of Junius.
- 1770...Thoughts On The Cause Of The Present Discontents.
...Removal of American import duties.
...Beginning of Lord North's Ministry.

- 1771...Burke becomes agent for New York.
...In Parliament Burke contends for freedom of speech in libel debates.
...He supports ceding to the press the right of reporting debates in Parliament.
- 1772...Burke opposes Anglican clergy petition for release from subscription to the Articles.
- 1773...Burke visits France, meets Encyclopaedists.
...Speaks in favor of Bill For Relief of Dissenters.
...Lord North's Regulating Act.
...Boston Tea Riot.
- 1774...Speech On American Taxation.
...Burke returned for Bristol.
...The Quebec Act.
...Continental Congress meets.
- 1775...Speech On Conciliation With America.
...War begins in America.
...Battles of Lexington, Bunker Hill, and invasion of Canada.
- 1776...American Declaration of Independence.
...Burke supports motions for conciliation.
...Address To The King.
- 1777...Letter To The Sheriffs Of Bristol.
...Battle of the Brandywine.
...Burgoyne and Ticonderoga.
- 1778...Burke favors relief of Roman Catholics.
...He supports lifting of restrictions on Irish trade.
...Alliance of France and America.
...Death of Chatham.
...Trial of Keppel.
- 1780...Speech On The Economical Reforms.
...The Gordon Riots.
...Burke loses his seat at Bristol.
...He is returned for Malton.

- 1781...The Virginia Campaign.
...The capitulation at Yorktown by Cornwallis.
- 1782...Lord North resigns.
...The Second Rockingham Ministry.
...Burke as Paymaster of the Forces.
...His economical reforms enacted in reduced form.
...Legislative Independence conceded to Ireland.
...Death of Rockingham.
...The Shelburne Ministry.
...Recognition of Independence of the United States.
- 1783...Treaty of Versailles.
...Shelburne resigns.
..."The Infamous Coalition" -- Fox and North.
...The Portland Ministry.
...Burke returns as Paymaster General.
...Burke Lord Rector of University of Glasgow.
...Speech On Fox's East India Bill.
...Fall of the Coalition.
...Burke leaves office for the last time.
...Beginning of the long Pitt Ministry.
- 1784...Defeat of North and Fox followers in general election.
...Pitt's India Bill.
...Burke's position at low ebb.
- 1785...Speech on Nabob of Arcot's Debts.
...Warren Hastings returns to England from India.
...Pitt's Bill for Parliamentary Reform.
- 1786...Burke moves impeachment of Warren Hastings.
- 1788...Burke supports inquiry into slave trade, and speaks in favor of its abolition.
...Trial of Hastings begins.
...The king's "insanity" and the Regency Question.
- 1789...The king's recovery.
...Meeting of the Estates General.
...Fall of The Bastille.
...King and Queen taken from Versailles.
- 1790...Speech on The Army Estimates.
...Burke's breach with Fox and Sheridan.
...He opposes Fox's motion to repeal Test and Corporation Acts.
...Reflections On The French Revolution.

1791...Letter To A Member Of The National Assembly.
...Speech On Quebec Government Bill.
...Burke's final rupture with Fox.
...Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs.
...Thoughts On French Affairs.

1792...Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe, on Roman
...Catholic disabilities in Ireland.
...France declares war on Austria and Prussia.
...Burke opposes petition for relief of Unitarians.

1793...Execution of Louis XVI.
...France declares war on England.
...Irish Catholics receive parliamentary franchise.
...Observations On The Conduct Of The Ministry.
...Remarks On The Policy Of The Allies.
...The Reign of Terror.

1794...Conclusion of Trial of Hastings.
...Burke retires from Parliament.
...His son Richard returned for Malton.
...Fall of Robespierre.
...Death of Richard Burke.
...Burke granted a pension.

1795...The recall of Fitzwilliam.
...Acquittal of Hastings.
...Emergence of Napoleon Buonaparte.
...Thoughts And Details on Scarcity.

1796...A Letter To A Noble Lord.
...Buonaparte's campaign in Italy.
...Letters On A Regicide Peace.
...Burke writes: "I am not long for this world."

1797...Death of Burke, July 9.

CHAPTER I.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF EDMUND BURKE (1729-1797)

Burke was born in Dublin on January 12, 1729. His father, Richard Burke, a successful attorney in the city, was a Protestant. His mother, Mary Nagle, was a devout Roman Catholic. Burke's only sister, Juliana, was reared in her mother's faith, while Edmund and his two brothers, Garret and Richard, had their early religious training in the established church to which their father adhered. Burke was warmly devoted to his mother, and there can be little doubt but that the oppressive legislation against the adherents of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland made its deep impression upon him at a very early age.

Probably the most authentic judgment of the religious attitude of Burke's parents was that given by his Quaker school-mate, Richard Shackleton. Shackleton was writing in 1770 to put Burke in the best possible light, and in referring to his mother he stated that "she practiced the duties of the Romish religion with a decent privacy."⁽¹⁾ No biographer has testified to any religious zeal on the part of Burke's father. In fact, Shackleton could only say that he "was more concerned to promote his children's interest in the world than to trouble himself about controverted points of religion; he therefore brought his sons up in the profession of that which he thought the most public road to preferment -- the religion of the country, established by law."⁽²⁾

1. Mary Leadbeater, The Leadbeater Papers, Volume II, Page 113.

2. Ibid. Page 113.

Because he was a delicate child, Burke was sent to the home of his mother's family in County Cork at the age of six, where he remained for five years. Part of his education in these formative years was in the Catholic village school. In 1741, at the age of twelve, Edmund and his two brothers entered the Quaker school at Ballitore, and the influence of his years in the atmosphere of Quaker piety and discipline remained with him throughout his life. The school was under the headship of Abraham Shackleton, and with the master's son, Richard, Burke formed a lifelong friendship.

For an appreciation of the village of Ballitore, and for authentic anecdotes of the old Quaker school there, students of Burke are indebted to the writings of Mary Leadbeater, the daughter of Richard Shackleton. "There was no place of worship in Ballitore except the Friends' meeting-house. To Crookstown, about half a mile distant, resorted the inhabitants who were of the Romish persuasion, and those of the Established Church attended services at Timolin. An usher of that profession was always employed at the school, who accompanied the boys to this place of worship, and heard them their catechism."⁽¹⁾ On the floor of the House of Commons, Burke declared forty years later that he had profited by the discipline of Bible reading at Ballitore, "morning, noon, and night."⁽²⁾

-
1. The Leadbeater Papers, Volume I, Page 72. (This first volume of the Leadbeater Papers is an invaluable source of information on the school and the Quaker community.)
 2. Speeches, Volume II, Page 179.
Report of Burke's Speech on The Protestant Association Riots of June 6, 1780.

The roster of the school at Ballitore contains a lengthy list of the Huguenot surnames of students who were Burke's contemporaries there. He thus discovered in school days that Roman Catholics were not the only group to be persecuted for their religious faith. In the year he left Ballitore, Burke wrote to Richard Shackleton: "So the two boobies (Huguenots) have left Ballitore, as they did Edenderry, as its probable they will soon quit Portalington, and then where the devil will they go? Queer travels theirs."⁽¹⁾

In May of that year, 1744, Burke entered Trinity College, Dublin. This meant a temporary separation from his friend Shackleton, and an examination of the correspondence between the two reveals the deeply religious nature of both. Burke wrote: "We take different roads, 'tis true, and since our intention is to please Him who suffered the punishment of our sins to justify us, He will, I believe, consider us accordingly, and receive us into that Glory which was not merited by our own good deeds but by His sufferings, which atone for our crimes."⁽²⁾ In the same letter he refers to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "God, all merciful, all good, has given us a guide, a talent to direct us in the slippery paths of the world; let us then, my dear friend, pray the Divine Being of His infinite mercy to help us in our undertaking by the saving and enlightening assistance of His Holy Spirit, while we seek what manner of serving Him will most please our great Creator...We will pray for one another reciprocally."⁽³⁾

-
1. The Leadbeater Papers, Volume II, Page 15.
Burke to Richard Shackleton, June 11, 1744.
 2. Ibid. Page 29.
Burke to Richard Shackleton, October 15, 1744.
 3. Ibid. Page 29.

There can be no doubt but that Burke had a distinguished academic career, a judgment which the evidence produced by Samuels⁽¹⁾ fully documents. In 1747 Burke and a number of his associates formed a debating club. Trinity College tradition maintains that its justly famous Historical Society grew directly out of this club formed by Burke and his companions. The Minute Book of the club reveals that Burke was once required to make an extemporaneous speech on the subject of the Sermon On The Mount. With characteristic undergraduate optimism Burke observed that: "The morality inculcated in this excellent sermon conduced so admirably to the improvement of society, that had its rules been observed we should have a heaven upon earth -- but since men are so wicked that this cannot be, those who do may be sure of finding it in a better place."⁽²⁾

While at Trinity Burke wrote a number of political tracts on the Lucas controversy, and in his final year he undertook the production of a literary weekly which he entitled The Reformer. In one issue of the latter, Burke is discussing the faults of an audience in their judgment of a stage production, and he employs this figure: "As Miracles are unnecessary to convince thinking men; so are Prodigies to please men of Taste."⁽³⁾ The ancient debate between faith and ethics receives this notice: "There are a Set of Men not infrequent in this City, who 'tho they allow of

-
1. Arthur P. I. Samuels, The Early Life, Correspondence, And Writings of Edmund Burke. Cambridge, 1923.
 2. Ibid. Page 252. (Samuels reproduces the Minute Book in full).
 3. The Reformer, February 11, 1748. (Samuels reproduces the entire thirteen issues of The Reformer as an appendix.)

Morality, cry down revealed Religion, yet in their Practice,
they make them equal, neglecting both."⁽¹⁾

In one of the last issues of The Reformer, Burke made this observation during the Lenten season. "The practice of virtue and religion is indispensable at all times, but never more than at this, when we commemorate the time our Creator became our Redeemer, and for our sake manifested in the highest manner the highest attributes of his divinity, his love and his power, the one in dying for us, and the other in conquering death, by giving that glorious proof of an immortality and being himself the First Fruits of the Resurrection."⁽²⁾

In 1750, Burke left Ireland and took up his residence in London for the purpose of studying law at the Middle Temple. From this time there follow several years of comparative obscurity, and to this period a careful student of Burke gives the title,
"The Missing Years in Edmund Burke's Biography."⁽³⁾ He was not thoroughly happy with his legal studies, and always felt the lure of a literary career. The uninspiring and rather purposeless nature of his activities is revealed in a letter to Shackleton which he wrote just one year after his arrival in London. "My health is tolerable, thank God; my studies, too, in the same degree, and my situation not disagreeable."⁽⁴⁾

-
1. The Reformer, April 7, 1748.
 2. Ibid.
 3. The title of an article by Dixon Wecter in The Publication of The Modern Language Association of America, December, 1938.
 4. The Leadbeater Papers, Volume II, Page 97. Burke to Richard Shackleton, April 5, 1751.

During these early years in London, Burke frequented the theatre, coffee houses, and the debating clubs. He read voraciously. In London he met William Burke, who was not a relative, as some biographers have assumed, but with whom he maintained a close friendship throughout his life, to the detriment of his own career, as we shall see later. As he mentioned in the letter to Shackleton, Burke's health at this time was not robust, and he spent much time in the country. He was befriended by Dr. Christopher Nugent, an Irish Roman Catholic physician, who was then practicing at Bath.

In 1756 Burke's first work was published anonymously. It was entitled The Vindication Of Natural Society, and was a satire on Bolingbroke, whose style Burke had so perfectly imitated that many readers missed the point entirely, and considered it a posthumous publication of one of Bolingbroke's works. The following year, 1757, might be taken as the year when Burke really emerged into the public light. In that year he published The Sublime And Beautiful, and with its appearance he established a place in the literary world of his time. On the basis of this work, Boswell recorded of Burke that he "viewed him as a planet in the heavens."⁽¹⁾

Hume had taken note of Burke through The Sublime And Beautiful and thought Burke capable of passing judgment on Adam Smith's most recent book. Writing to the latter, Hume said: "I give you thanks for the agreeable present of your Theory (Smith's Theory Of The Moral Sentiments). Wedderburn and I made presents of our copies to such of our acquaintances as we thought good judges, and proper to spread the reputation of the book. I sent one to...

1. Quoted by Dixon Wecter, Edmund Burke And His Kinsmen, Page 17.

Burke, an Irish gentleman who wrote lately a very pretty treatise on the Sublime."⁽¹⁾

Some scholars have expressed regret that Burke did not give himself entirely to philosophy. With his religious presuppositions, he would undoubtedly have made a contribution to the perennial problem of the relation between philosophy and religious faith. In this first solid work, he wrote:

"The notion of some great power must be always precedent to our dread of it. But this dread must necessarily follow the idea of such a power, when it is once excited in the mind. It is on this principle that true religion has, and must have, so large a mixture of salutary fear; and that false religions have generally nothing else but fear to support them. Before the Christian religion had, as it were, humanized the idea of the Divinity, and brought it somewhat nearer to us, there was very little said of the love of God." (2)

The second significant event of the year 1757 was Burke's marriage to June Nugent, the daughter of his physician at Bath. There was great disagreement among earlier biographers as to his wife's religious profession, but Shackleton's clear statement in a letter which appeared in the London Evening Post in 1770 is now generally accepted. "He took to wife the daughter of Dr. Nugent, born also in Munster, but educated in England; a genteel, well-bred woman, of the Roman faith."⁽³⁾ And he added in a footnote to the letter: "His wife has since conformed legally to the Church of England."

-
1. David Hume to Adam Smith, April 17, 1759.
The Letters of David Hume. (Ed. Greig).
Volume I, Page 164.
 2. Works, Volume II, Page 607.
The Sublime And Beautiful, Part II, Section V.
 3. The entire letter is reproduced by Samuels,
Op. Cit., Page 402.

Burke once said of his home that his every care vanished when he entered it. Boswell and Dr. Johnson were frequent visitors, and the former once wrote to Burke: "I used to say that I was never sure of your being a very happy man, till I was admitted familiarly to your house, and saw how agreeably you lived with your endearing connections of wife and son."⁽¹⁾ From the leading political figures of the times who were frequent visitors, to the humble Quakers from Ballitore, who came at rare intervals, all who knew the Burke home were agreed on the fine character and sanguine temperament of Jane Nugent. Fanny Burney once wrote in her diary: "Mrs. Burke was just what I have always seen her, soft, gentle, reasonable, and obliging."⁽²⁾

The first years after marriage were filled with financial problems, and it appears that his father-in-law met many of Burke's pressing expenses. In 1758, a son, Richard, was born. Burke sought to be appointed consul at Madrid, but his efforts were unsuccessful. Most biographers agree that he coveted an appointment to the chair of logic at the University of Glasgow, but it was not forthcoming. These were indeed lean years, and though he had two works⁽³⁾ published, they brought him little financial return.

In 1759 The Annual Register came to the birth under Burke's editorship. Careful scholarship has established that Burke

-
1. James Boswell to Burke, April 30, 1782.
The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay (Fanny Burney).
Volume V, Page 313.
 3. Abridgment of English History, and An Account Of The European Settlements in America. (The latter was written in collaboration with William Burke).

"probably carried it on alone until about the time he entered Parliament, when it became necessary for him to have assistance."⁽¹⁾ The wide reading and diligent study required to produce this annual review of affairs was part of the solid preparation for his parliamentary career. For producing The Annual Register, Burke received from Dodsley the sum of one hundred pounds per annum.

About this time Burke met William Gerard Hamilton, who was soon to go to Ireland as chief secretary to the Viceroy, Lord Halifax. Hamilton offered to take Burke with him as his own private secretary, and in 1760 Burke was back in Dublin. In later years he complained that his years with Hamilton were largely wasted, but it was while he was associated with Hamilton that Burke received his introduction to the leading figures of the political world, both in England and Ireland. He saw from the inside the working of the oppressive penal laws against the Roman Catholics, and it was while he was in Ireland with Hamilton that he began the series of tracts on that subject.

Hamilton secured for Burke a pension in the amount of three hundred pounds per year, and this sum, in addition to his salary from Hamilton and the stipend for producing The Annual Register, put his finances on a more stable basis. Furthermore, it was common knowledge that Hamilton leaned heavily on Burke's advice, and this served to enhance the latter's reputation. Hamilton lost his position as chief secretary to the Viceroy in 1764, and

1. T. W. Copeland, "Burke And Dodsley's Annual Register", Publication Of The Modern Language Association of America. Volume LIV, Page 223.

Burke returned to London. The following year he and Hamilton separated. Burke gave up his pension, and was once more plunged into his financial embarrassments.

By this time, Burke was moving in the circle which included Dr. Johnson, Garrick, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Goldsmith, among others. Boswell says: "It is very pleasing to me to record, that Johnson's high estimation of the talents of this gentleman (Burke) was uniform from their early acquaintance."⁽¹⁾ Burke thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship of Dr. Johnson's famous Literary Club, of which he was a charter member.

Aside from the returns from his literary pursuits, Burke had no fixed income, and he found himself again the object of "the hunt of obloquy" which he once declared had pursued him all his life. But he was about to establish a connection which was to define his whole future career. In 1765 he became the private secretary to Lord Rockingham, who was then First Lord of the Treasury and the titular head of the political clique, the Rockingham Whigs. Upon his appointment to this responsible position, Burke's Irish background and his known Catholic sympathies became the subject of attack:

"Soon after Lord Rockingham, upon the warm recommendation of many friends, had appointed Burke his Secretary, the Duke of Newcastle, wishing probably to procure the place for some dependant of his own, waited on Lord Rockingham, over whom his age, party dignity, and ancient family

1. Boswell's Life of Johnson. (The G. Birkbeck Hill edition). Volume II, Page 450.

connection, had given him much influence, and even some degree of authority, and informed him, that he had unwarily taken into his service a man of dangerous principles, and one who was by birth and education a Papist, and a Jacobite; a calumny founded upon Burke's Irish connections."⁽¹⁾

Rockingham immediately laid the whole of Newcastle's charges before Burke, who promptly offered to resign. But when he had replied to the accusations to Rockingham's satisfaction, the latter insisted that Burke remain at his post. Burke proved himself invaluable to his new employer. Winstanley thus quotes a letter from Lord Buckinghamshire to Grenville, written in June of 1766: "Lord Albermarle and Mr. Bourk (I think that is the name not of Rockingham's right hand but of both his hands) evidently direct the wires which move our political puppets."⁽²⁾

Trevelyan is commenting on the whole aristocratic structure of society when he says: "The higher ranks of this aristocracy set the tone to the bourgeoisie and professional class, and they in return supplied the nobles with brains and ideas -- as for instance Burke supplied Rockingham."⁽³⁾

This great dependence of Rockingham on Burke becomes even more apparent from an examination of the Wentworth Woodhouse manuscripts. Whenever any political problem arose, Rockingham

1. Francis Hardy, Memoirs of the Earl of Charlemont, Volume II, Page 281-282.

2. D. A. Winstanley, Personal And Party Government, Page 243, footnote.

3. G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, Page 399.

would immediately get off a hurried note to Burke, urging an early meeting, at which time Burke was to chart a course of action. Just one year after Burke's appointment, Rockingham wrote to him: "I think since we parted I have been in one continual flurry and uncertainty as to my own notions...I reserve all political speculations till we meet."⁽¹⁾ As we shall see later in this study, Burke played the role of apologist for the rule of the aristocratic families. Writing to the Duke of Richmond in 1772, he refers to himself as among those who are "but annual plants, that perish with our season, and leave no sort of traces behind us. You, if you are what you ought to be, are in my eye the great oaks that shade a country, and perpetuate your benefits from generation to generation."⁽²⁾

It was of course through Lord Rockingham's influence that Burke entered Parliament. In December of 1765 he was elected for the pocket borough of Wendover, and one month later made his first speech in the Commons. His reputation was established immediately, and it did not require much prescience for Dr. Johnson to remark: "Now we who know Burke, know that he will be one of the first men in this country."⁽³⁾

Trevelyan has written an apt characterization of the age in which Burke entered Parliament. With very little changes it could stand as a description, not only of the age, but of Burke's own attitude. "It is a classical age, that is to say, an age of

-
1. Rockingham to Burke, November 1, 1766.
The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 190.
Burke to the Duke of Richmond, November 17, 1772.
 3. Boswell's Life of Johnson. (The G. Birkbeck Hill edition). Volume II, Page 450.

unchallenged assumptions, when the philosophers of the street, such as Dr. Johnson, have ample leisure to moralize on the human scene, in the happy belief that the state of society and the modes of thought to which they are accustomed are not mere passing aspects of an ever shifting kaleidoscope, but permanent habitations, the final outcome of reason and experience -- such an age regards itself not as setting out but as having arrived." ⁽¹⁾ We shall see in a subsequent chapter of this study that Burke was the great exponent of this view.

The American question was the predominant one before the politicians in the years 1765 and 1766, and Burke spoke powerfully in favor of repealing the troublesome Stamp Act. The opposition insisted that the mother country had the right to lay such a tax on the colonies, but Burke counselled against any discussion of the problem on the basis of abstract rights. Since he was by now practically Rockingham's oracle, the repeal of the Stamp Act and the temporizing policy of the Declaratory Act, that "olive wreath clumsily twined round the handle of a sword," ⁽²⁾ were due in significant measure to Burke's counsel and efforts. ⁽³⁾

-
1. G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, Page 340.
 2. C. G. Robertson, England Under The Hanoverians, Page 261.
 3. Stephen makes this comment on Burke's part in passing the Declaratory Act: "Indeed, the assertion of the absolute supremacy of the Imperial Government, coupled with an abandonment of the measures passed in virtue of its supremacy, resembled, at first sight, one of those abstract rights which Burke so intensely hated."

Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought In The Eighteenth Century. Volume II, Page 239-240.

To Burke must also go some credit for the legislation passed during the first Rockingham administration, making general warrants illegal. Burke loathed Wilkes' private life as much as he did that of Rousseau, but he was convinced that the cause of Wilkes was the cause of liberty. Burke would have agreed with Turberville: "Whether we like it or not, as Gladstone said, Wilkes must be enrolled among the great champions of English freedom."⁽¹⁾

The Rockingham government fell in July of 1766, and Burke began his long years in opposition. In the popular mind, Pitt really received the credit for the repeal of the Stamp Act. Burke wrote his Short Account Of A Late Administration in which he stated the accomplishments of the Rockingham regime. "In that space of time the distractions of the British Empire were composed, by the repeal of the American stamp act; But the constitutional superiority of Great Britain was preserved by the act for securing the dependence of the colonies."⁽²⁾ Subsequent events, however, were to show that the problem of America had not been solved, but only postponed.

In 1768 Burke purchased the country estate at Beaconsfield which he called by that name. The estate cost twenty thousand pounds, and how Burke managed to finance its purchase was the open conjecture of his friends, while it provided the opportunity for dark rumor to be spread by his political enemies. In that year he wrote to Shackleton: "As to myself, I am, by the very singular kindness of some friends, in a way very agreeable to me...I have

-
1. A. S. Turberville, English Men And Manners In The Eighteenth Century, Page 283.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 1.
Short Account Of A Late Administration.

made a push, with all I could collect of my own, and the aid of my friends, to cast a little root in this country." ⁽¹⁾ Mary Leadbeater visited Beaconsfield and afterwards wrote a lengthy poem to which we are indebted for a description of Burke's home and family life. No doubt it contrasted sharply with the simplicity of her Quaker home in Ballitore, and these two lines indicate that motif of feigned opulence in Burke which less friendly critics have played upon:

"Painting and sculpture there their pride display,
And splendid chambers decked in rich array." ⁽²⁾

Undoubtedly Burke received some outright gifts to help finance the purchase, and he was always borrowing thousands of pounds from his affluent friends. At Rockingham's death, Burke owed him the sum of thirty thousand pounds, which, by the terms of the will, was cancelled. It was rumored that he had speculated heavily in India stock. Then, too, his connection with the other Burkes was always a source of embarrassment, for his brother Richard and William Burke made Beaconsfield their headquarters. Of the latter members of the household, Wecter concludes: "Thus up to the last years, a sorry blend of bankruptcy and chicanery appears to be typical of the lesser Burkes." ⁽³⁾

The strange thing is that Burke idealized these relatives who constituted "such a train after him as would sink anybody

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 77.
Burke to Richard Shackleton, May 1, 1768.
 2. The Leadbeater Papers, Volume I, Page 136.
 3. Dixon Wecter, Edmund Burke And His Kinsmen,
Page 45.

(1)
but himself." All the Burkes shared a common purse so that Edmund probably benefited from their questionable enterprises when they were successful, but most of the time he found them a drain on his modest resources. The Burkes entertained on a lavish scale. Boswell made this entry in 1774: "When the general election broke up the delightful society in which we had spent some time at Beaconsfield, Dr. Johnson shook the hospitable master of the house kindly by the hand, and said, 'Farewell, my dear Sir, and remember that I wish you all the success which ought to be wished you, which can possibly be wished you indeed -- by an

(2)
honest man." In this setting it is obvious that Dr. Johnson was not referring to Burke's finances but to his politics. Nevertheless, critics have fastened on this remark of Johnson's as indicating that he could not apply the phrase "an honest man" (3)
to Burke.

The Rockinghams had come to power at the displacement of Grenville, and the latter had written a tract in defence of his policies. In 1769 Burke replied to it in his Observations On A Late Publication On The Present State Of The Nation. In this work Burke demonstrated his knowledge of the fields of commerce and finance. The following year he published his well-known Thoughts On The Cause Of The Present Discontents. In this work

-
1. Countess of Minto, Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto. Volume II, Page 136.
 2. Boswell's Life of Johnson. (The G. Birkbeck Hill edition). Volume II, Page 285.
 3. The whole problem of Burke's financial difficulties and a judgment of his financial integrity is adequately presented by Wecter in the work cited above, and by Magnus in his Edmund Burke, Pages 39 to 57.

he attacked the growing power of the king and pointed out that the aim was "to secure to the court the unlimited and uncontrolled use of its own vast influence, under the sole direction of its own private favour."⁽¹⁾ Of the court circle he said: "The name by which they choose to distinguish themselves, is that of king's men, or the king's friends, by an invidious exclusion of the rest of his majesty's most loyal and affectionate subjects."⁽²⁾ His plea was for "restoring the constitution to its original principles."⁽³⁾

The attacks on the government by The Letters of Junius followed so much the point of Burke's treatise that he was widely held to be the author. So widespread was this opinion that he wrote to Townsend in 1771: "I now give you my word and honour that I am not the author of Junius, and that I know not the author of that paper, and I do authorize you to say so."⁽⁴⁾

It was in the year 1772 that Burke gave his first clear statement in Parliament of what was to be his lifelong attitude toward the established church. In that year a number of Anglican clergymen petitioned to be relieved of subscription to the

-
1. Works, Volume III, Page 118.
Thoughts On The Cause Of The Present Discontents.
 2. Ibid. Page 130.
 3. Ibid. Page 173.
 4. Works, Volume I, Page 138.
Burke To Charles Townsend, November 24, 1771.

thirty-nine articles, and to substitute a subscription to the Scriptures.⁽¹⁾ Burke opposed the petition with great force, saying: "The laws of toleration provide for every real grievance that these gentlemen can rationally complain of. Are they hindered from professing their belief of what they think to be truth? If they do not like the establishment, there are a hundred different modes of dissent, in which they may teach. But even if they are so unfortunately circumstanced that of all that variety, none will please them, they have free liberty to assemble a congregation of their own."⁽²⁾

The next year, the dissenters requested to be relieved of certain measures they found oppressive. Burke favored the granting of their petition, since it did not concern the establishment, and made a plea for the general encouragement of religion in the country. "Even the man who does not hold revelation, yet who wishes that it were proved to him, who observes a pious silence with regard to it, such a man, though not a Christian, is governed by religious principles. Let him be tolerated in this country. Let it be but a serious religion, natural or revealed, take what you can get; cherish, blow up the slightest spark. One day it may be a pure and holy flame."⁽³⁾

In the same year, 1773, Burke visited France to take his son Richard to the school at Auxerre. There he met members of the French clergy whom he was to befriend, along with many other

-
1. Every significant speech or writing by Burke on religious issues will be examined at length in the following chapters of this study.
 2. Works, Volume VI, Page 85-86.
Speech On The Petition Of The Anglican Clergy, 1772.
 3. Works, Volume VI, Page 100.
Speech On The Bill For The Relief of Dissenters, 1773.

Catholic refugees, after the outbreak of the Revolution. In Paris, Burke was received as an English statesman and eminent man of letters, being entertained in the most fashionable salons. He met Marie Antoinette, of whom he was to write in such a romantic vein in the Reflections. It was perhaps in this atmosphere of intellectual rationalism that Burke developed his fierce hatred of atheists which will be examined in the following chapter.

The following year Lord Verney had other plans for Burke's seat at Wendover, but Rockingham could not see the party whip turned out. How easy it was to find a place for Burke is indicated by this note from Rockingham: "I have received your letter and have set off an express to Malton to desire my friends there to chuse you one of their members."⁽¹⁾ It was while Burke was proceeding to Malton that the invitation came to stand for Bristol, the second city in the country. No doubt he hoped that a thriving Bristol constituency would secure validation of his commercial views. He was thus a member for that city when he made his famous speech on conciliation with America in 1775.

Perhaps the best known peroration from that speech is the classic statement: "I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against an whole people."⁽²⁾ And again: "An Englishman is the unfittest person on earth to argue another Englishman into slavery."⁽³⁾ The following, in a religious vein, is not

-
1. Rockingham to Burke, October 5, 1774.
The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 263.
Speech On Conciliation With America, 1775.
 3. Ibid. Page 261.

nearly so well-known, but it is integral to the aspect of Burke's thought under consideration in this study:

"Religion, always a principle of energy, in this new people (the American colonists) is in no way worn out or impaired; and their mode of professing it is also one main cause of this free spirit. The people are Protestants and of that kind which is the most adverse to all implicit submission of mind and opinion. This is a persuasion not only favourable to liberty, but built upon it." (1)

It should be borne in mind that Burke had been acting as the agent of the colony of New York since 1771. His critics were quick to point out, therefore, that whenever he spoke in behalf of the colonists, his was not entirely a disinterested point of view. His speech on American Taxation, to those who opposed it, had therefore some of the implications of special pleading. There is a statement in one letter to his clients in New York which aptly sets forth his point of view. "I was persuaded that when one negotiates with power, it is policy to give up handsomely what cannot be retained."⁽²⁾

The letter book in which Burke kept all his correspondence with the colony he was serving, reveals his deep regret at the approaching crisis. The following is from the last letter in the collection: "We have had publick notice, that no packet after this will regularly sail for America. Nobody can more deeply and sincerely regret than I do, the unfortunate differences which

-
1. Works, Volume III, Page 254.
Speech On Conciliation With America, 1775.
 2. Burke To The Gentlemen Of The Committee In New York, August 12, 1774.
Contained in Burke's letterbook for his relations with the Colony of New York.
The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.

have thus cut off the intercourse of countries which ought to be united by the strongest and dearest of all ties."⁽¹⁾

It is a fact noted by all careful biographers that Burke had periods of extreme mental depression and melancholia. They were by no means limited to his later years, as some writers, notably Buckle, have tended to emphasize. In August of 1776, Burke wrote to Shackleton on the subject of the situation in America: "We are deeply in blood. We expect now to hear of some sharp affair every hour. God knows how it will be ... Things are in a bad train, and in more ways than one. No good can come of any event in this war to any virtuous interest. We have forgot or thrown away all our ancient principles. This view sometimes sinks my spirits."⁽²⁾

Just six days after Burke wrote that letter to Shackleton, he received this urgent note from Fox. It is indicative of the immediate effect of the American Declaration of Independence, and the frantic efforts made to agree on a policy:

"Ten thousand reasons have prevented me from going to Beaconsfield for this week past; but the declaration of independency seems to me an event which we ought not surely to pass over in silence. I have seen the D. of Portland who agrees with me upon this subject, and who has written to Lord Rockingham to settle a meeting at Wentworth for Monday, August 26.

For God's sake endeavour to be there by that day as there is no time to be lost. Parliament certainly meets October 27; so that if we think of doing any thing previous to the

-
1. Burke To The Gentlemen Of The Committee In New York, October 3, 1775.
Contained in the Letterbook cited above.
 2. The Leadbeater Papers, Volume II, Page 126.
Burke to Richard Shackleton, August 11, 1776.

meeting, you must see clearly that Monday the 26th is by no means too early a day. I shall go to Wakefield in my way to Wentworth and shall bring certainly full powers from the D. of Grafton if not himself to the meeting." (1)

When the legislation of 1778, which gave a measure of relief to Roman Catholics, was passed, Burke immediately became the target for the old charges that he was a Jesuit at heart. Rioting broke out in Scotland, but nothing like that which London was to witness two years later. The following is typical of the tone of the letters which came to Burke at the time: "You have treated the Edinburgh and Glasgow mobs with deserved and efficacious severity, and 'tis now past a doubt with us that you are a staunch Roman." (2) Under such charges, and being under attack from his constituents at Bristol for influencing legislation to lift restrictions on Irish trade, at the same time that he was being accused of disloyalty in the American problem, Burke wrote to his son Richard: "God bless you, grant you your course in less stormy seas than I have been buffeted in." (3)

The Gordon Riots broke out in the early summer of 1780, and Burke's part in obtaining relief for Roman Catholics two years earlier was used to arouse the mob against him, as well as against the others who had favored the legislation. At the height of the rioting, the Earl of Jersey wrote: "Burke's life is threatened (4) in the most open and determined manner."

-
1. C. J. Fox to Burke, August 17, 1776.
The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Letter to Burke From An Anonymous Correspondent in
Edinburgh, April 10, 1779.
The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 3. Burke To His Son Richard, November 20, 1778.
The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 4. The Earl of Jersey To Countess Spencer, June 6, 1780.
Quoted by J. Paul DeCastro, The Gordon Riots, Page 81.

When the violence had subsided and the offenders were brought to trial, the Protestant Association urged the execution of those who had engaged in plundering during the rioting. But Burke saw that it was not the spirit of pillaging but the spirit of religious intolerance that had produced the disasters. "They recommend that the offenders for plunder ought to be punished, and the offenders from principle spared. But the contrary rule ought to be followed...Such common plunderers would furnish no example in the present case where the false or pretended principle of religion, which leads to crimes, is the very thing to be discouraged."⁽¹⁾ Of the treatment accorded to Catholics during the outbreak, Burke wrote: "Men (Roman Catholics) who hold no other opinions than what were a while ago held by the whole world, and which are now held by great nations, and not only not concealed as mysteries, but publicly avowed, are threatened as if they were a new and obscure sect of fanatics, who entertained principles which they did not avow, and were growing thereby into a conspiracy dangerous to all government."⁽²⁾

Burke had been receiving a steady stream of pleas for the repeal of the legislation of 1778. In reply to one such appeal, he referred to that legislation as "the late acts of scanty and imperfect toleration."⁽³⁾ He thus puts upon a group in Edinburgh part of the responsibility for the Gordon Riots: "Am I to make myself the dupe of a dirty faction in Edinburgh, because their miserable agents have set on a rabble of miscreants here, to

-
1. Works, Volume V, Page 581.
Thoughts On The Approaching Executions, 1780.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 436-437. Burke To The Lord Chief Justice Of The Common Pleas, June 15, 1780.
 3. Ibid. Page 443.

insult the parliament, and then to set fire to London, to
demolish Newgate, and attempt to plunder the bank?"⁽¹⁾

The disaffection of his Bristol constituents with their member had been steadily growing. Burke's relation to Bristol will be examined more fully in chapter three of this study. As we have seen, one of the causes of the ill-feeling toward Burke was his advocacy of the lifting of restrictions on Irish trade, which had been in a measure accomplished in 1779. In the famous speech previous to the election of 1780, he defended himself on that charge by saying: "It has been said... that I acted as a native of Ireland, than as an English member of parliament... I was an Irishman in the Irish business, just as much as I was an American, when, on the same principles, I wished you to concede to America, at a time when she prayed concession at your feet."⁽²⁾ Burke's defence was that if his counsel had been heeded, America would not have been lost to the empire, and that the same narrow views which had estranged the colonies should not prevail on the Irish trade question.

His closing remarks were addressed to the question of the Roman Catholic relief legislation of 1778. Barker says: "He knew that he spoke to a critical audience: the solid Protestantism of Bristol had trembled on the brink of a sympathetic riot against Popery, only three months before, when London seemed to have lit a Protestant beacon-fire for the nation."⁽³⁾

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 444.
Burke to John Noble, August 11, 1780.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 415.
Speech Previous To The Election At Bristol, 1780.
 3. Ernest Barker, Burke And Bristol, Page 92.

To this "solid Protestantism of Bristol" Burke made this fine statement: "Those who think themselves good Protestants, from their animosity to others, are in that respect no Protestants at all."⁽¹⁾ In fact he made what must have seemed an audacious claim to his offended constituents, that what had been done for the Catholics had been done from duty as a good Protestant. "One of the acts authorizing such things (oppression of Roman Catholics) was that which we in part repealed, knowing what our duty was; and doing that duty as men of honor and virtue, as good Protestants, and as good citizens. Let him stand forth that disapproves what we have done."⁽²⁾

Upon the conclusion of this speech, Burke proceeded immediately to the canvass, but it was soon apparent that there was no hope for his re-election. His opponent, Mr. Coombe, died suddenly in the midst of his canvass, and Burke observed: "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue."⁽³⁾ Of his decision not to stand for re-election, he wrote to Lady Rockingham: "I felt a serenity which I never before experienced."⁽⁴⁾ When Fox learned that his friend was no longer to sit for the second city in the land, he wrote to Burke, referring to Bristol as "that rascally city, for so I must call it after the way in which it has behaved to you."⁽⁵⁾

-
1. Works, Volume III, Page 424.
Speech Previous To The Election At Bristol, 1780.
 2. Ibid. Page 426.
 3. Works, Volume III, Page 466.
Speech At Bristol Declining The Poll, 1780.
 4. Burke To Lady Rockingham, September, 1780.
The Rockingham MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 5. Works, Volume I, Page 445.
C. J. Fox To Burke, September 15, 1780.

It was a foregone conclusion, of course, that Rockingham would find a place for Burke. There was a certain prestige in sitting for Bristol which was not to be re-captured, but Burke knew he would have a seat before the next session of Parliament opened. Just two months after he declined the poll at Bristol, he wrote to an anonymous correspondent there: "I know you are anxious about my being in parliament. I am then to tell you that the matter is so far arranged that I may be in whenever I please."⁽¹⁾ Rockingham offered him Malton, and he represented that constituency for his remaining fourteen years in parliament.

The North government had steadily lost ground during the last phases of the war in America. Just before Burke lost his seat at Bristol, the Commons had passed the resolution that "the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished." Burke had said substantially this in his Thoughts On The Present Discontents ten years earlier, and had pressed the charge at every opportunity. Cornwallis surrendered to Washington at Yorktown in the fall of 1781. Five months later North resigned, and the second Rockingham Administration came into power in March of 1782.

After so many years in opposition, Burke now found himself in office, and the immediate future wore a pleasing aspect. He was given the position of Paymaster General, at a salary of four thousand pounds. All the Burkes were given places by the administration. Burke had pressed for reform measures in 1780 and in 1781, only to see them defeated. Now he was in position to

1. The letter in Burke's hand is dated November 3, 1780. The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.

effect the reforms he had long advocated, and the plan which he successfully carried through insured great savings. While his economical reforms were going forward, another object dear to his heart was achieved, legislative independence was conceded to Ireland.

This bright outlook of things for Burke was completely clouded by the sudden death of Rockingham in July, 1782. A week later, Burke resigned his office when Shelburne came to power. But the new administration was to be short-lived also. In February of 1783, Shelburne resigned before the "infamous coalition."

Both Burke and Fox had roundly criticized Lord North throughout the twelve years of his administration, but now they announced they were ready to form a government with the very man they had opposed for so many years. Burke returned to his old position as Paymaster General. He brought a flood of criticism upon himself by immediately reinstating two minor officials in the pay office who had been charged with embezzlements. He continued the reforms he had instituted under Rockingham, but the coalition could not stand in the face of the opposition of George III., and the scorn of the whole country for what was really an abandonment of principle in the interest of position. In December, 1783, the government fell, and Burke left office for the last time.

Some of the bitterness of the last weeks of the coalition had been alleviated when he became Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow in September. If he had actually coveted the chair of logic there a quarter of a century before, he must have

drawn some sharp mental contrasts between the academic life and the rough and tumble of a parliamentary career, as he stood before the assembly in his new office in April of 1784. While the position of Lord Rector by no means carried with it full responsibility for the conduct of the university, Burke once noted the following principle for a philosophy of education: "To learn only to be learned is moving in a strange circle; the end of learning is not knowledge but virtue."⁽¹⁾

It was while he was in Scotland to be installed as Lord Rector at Glasgow that Burke had a long conversation with Dr. Thomas Somerville. The latter has reported in his autobiography the substance of the conversation that passed between him and Burke at that time. "Mr. Burke professed himself a firm believer in the divine authority of the Gospel; but discovered what I thought an illiberal and exclusive partiality to the Episcopalian government and form of worship. He spoke with high admiration of Butler's Analogy, as containing the most satisfactory answer to the objections of philosophical scepticism."⁽²⁾ Those who have known Burke's attitude toward the Americans only through his speeches on the floor of the Commons will find in Somerville's report some very critical material. "I was not a little surprised by the disparaging and even contemptuous terms in which he expressed himself in regard to the Americans, whom he had so often eulogized in Parliament, during the continuance of the late war."⁽³⁾

-
1. From an essay entitled "Several Scattered Hints Concerning Philosophy And Learning Collected From My Papers." Contained in a notebook kept by William and Edmund Burke. The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Thomas Somerville, My Own Life And Times (1741-1814), Page 222.
 3. Ibid. Page 222.

With Rockingham gone from the scene, and the Coalition Government turned out, there began the long years of "a kingdom trusted to a schoolboy's care," as the younger Pitt became Prime Minister at the age of twenty-four. In the election of 1784, the supporters of Lord North and Fox were disastrously beaten, and Pitt's position was made stronger than ever. Burke and Fox, who had so roundly condemned North throughout the seventies, now were seated with him in opposition. Burke's past could scarcely be squared with his present position beside the man whose policies he had so viciously attacked for more than a decade. With the rout of the Whigs in the recent election, the future held little promise. No one could then foresee the renaissance of Burke's influence in the nineties, which was to rescue him from the threatening obscurity.

At this point it is well to turn our thought very briefly to the role Burke played in the cause of India. His part in the trial of Warren Hastings is well known, and an examination of the influence of Burke's efforts in that trial in developing a sense of trusteeship for dependent peoples will receive due consideration in chapter three of this study. The problem of India and of Burke's relation to it is a very lengthy one,⁽¹⁾ and for the purpose of this study little of the historical background needs to be said at this point. There are, however, several significant personal factors which should be noted.

1. Burke's Works contain over fifteen hundred pages of closely printed material on the question of India.

Burke was no doubt jealous of the Nabobs who were gracing the London drawing rooms in the years when he was pouring his strength into a parliamentary career, spent for the greater part in opposition. Conscious of his own great powers, he saw young men returning from the Orient immensely wealthy, purchasing great country estates and their seats in Parliament, while he was constantly in debt, and constantly in need of Rockingham's influence to maintain his place in the Commons. Then again, Burke's opposition to the growing power of the crown had to be balanced with his zeal for defending the property rights of the East India Company whenever the interests of the two clashed, though in later years he too advocated parliamentary interference. To all this must be added the well-known fact that Burke loved a crusade, and seemed to require a cause to which he could give himself with passionate devotion. To the cause of Ireland, the cause of Roman Catholic emancipation, and the cause of America, he added the cause of the people of India.

Those who had returned from India with their newly acquired wealth naturally raised questions in the public mind as to whether all their gains had come through honest effort. The first attempt to deal with the situation was the Regulating Act of 1773. Among other things, this act provided for a Governor General and Council for Bengal. Hastings was the first Governor General, and in 1774 Philip Francis went out as a member of the Council, at a salary of ten thousand pounds. Hastings and Francis quarreled, and the latter, as long as he was in India, opposed the Governor General at every turn. The two finally

dueled in 1780, and when Francis recovered from the wound which Hastings had inflicted, he promptly returned to England to plan his revenge.

Every move by Burke after that time which concerned India was informed in whole or in part by the strange power which Francis exercised over him. In 1781 Burke was the chairman of a committee to inquire into the administration of justice in India. Burke himself wrote the famous ninth and eleventh reports. When Fox's East India Bill, which Burke had largely drawn, was being debated in 1783, Burke said finely: "The situation of man is the preceptor of his duty." But always in the background was Francis, pouring his own interpretation of Indian affairs into the ear of the orator. In the coalition government, Burke found himself defending essentially the same position with regard to the East India Company that he had attacked three years earlier, when it was advanced by Lord North. In 1784 Pitt brought in his own India Bill, which was to remain in force until the middle of the nineteenth century.

In 1785 Hastings came home from India, and the next year Burke moved his impeachment. During the trial, which began in effect with Burke's motion to impeach in 1786 and lasted until 1794, Burke defended the rights of the dependent and backward people of India with passionate zeal, but he also revealed every weakness in his own personal armour. He was excessively verbose. He used language which offended good taste. He employed personal recrimination. He seemed utterly incapable at times of bringing a fair mind to any consideration of the career of Hastings in India.

Burke once made an excellent piece of self-analysis when he wrote in his notebook: "It is the misfortune of men of genius to be eccentric or extravagant."⁽¹⁾ He once wrote to Shackleton that "a difference of opinion, and a quarrel between you and me, have never been the same thing."⁽²⁾ But it was Burke's great fault that he could not consistently live up to this fine declaration. He had unbounded admiration for his friends, and he vilified his opponents. Francis, who did so much to prejudice his mind against Hastings, once said of Burke:⁽³⁾ "Everyone with him was either God or the Devil."

These personal characteristics are part of the explanation as to why Burke never attained a position of consistent leadership in the government of the country. At the death of Rockingham, when the party was casting about for a leader, Lecky explains why the choice did not fall to Burke. "The greatest and wisest man in the ministry was Edmund Burke, but he was not even in the Cabinet; he was looked upon as a needy, though brilliant adventurer under the patronage of Rockingham; and even if he had belonged to the small circle of governing families, he was, with all his gifts, utterly destitute of the skill, temper, and tact that are required for managing men and directing a legislative assembly."⁽⁴⁾

-
1. From an essay entitled "The Man of Spirit." Contained in the notebook kept by William and Edmund Burke. The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 27. Burke to Richard Shackleton, April, 1763.
 3. Quoted by Bertram Newman, Edmund Burke, Page 63.
 4. William E. H. Lecky, A History Of England In The Eighteenth Century. Volume IV, Page 236.

As the trial of Hastings wore on, year after year, Burke became less and less a power in the Commons. At times when he rose to speak members would create a noisy confusion or simply walk out in great numbers. "He was known nowadays as the dinner-bell of the House, so rapidly did its benches thin at his rising."⁽¹⁾ His old circle of intimate friends had been broken by the death of Goldsmith and Garrick in the seventies, and by that of Dr. Johnson in 1784. His financial problems were more pressing than ever. Only the regency crisis brought a ray of hope to this rapidly darkening picture.

When George III. temporarily lost his mind in the fall of 1788, the opposition thought they were within reach of power once more. It was common knowledge that if the Prince of Wales should assume the regency he would press for the dismissal of Pitt. No doubt Burke saw himself in the office of Paymaster General once more, if this could come to pass. He attacked Pitt's Regency Bill with utter abandon, and indeed brought a measure of disgrace upon himself for his language concerning both the demented king and the proposals advanced to restrict the power of the regent. When the king fully recovered, the high hopes of the Whigs were blasted, and Burke sank deeper into his own mental depression and frustration.

Guedella has a rather colorful passage in which he describes this period and Burke's place in it. "The sun, the decorously gilded sun of the eighteenth century, was sinking. There was

1. John Richard Green, History Of The English People.
Volume VIII, Page 89.

a sudden chill of night in the air; and Mr. Burke, at sixty, turned shuddering away. One may forgive his weakness. It was, to all appearance, the end of an age; and he had been far too much the man of it to welcome the cataclysm. His leaping mind had always worn the sober livery of its ordered thought, and even in the rich ornament of his prose he had conformed to its standards. It is hardly just to measure his wisdom by his failure to welcome a new world late in life. Silence comes easily upon peaks in Darien; but when discoveries invade the watcher's life with threats to all that has made it gracious or⁽¹⁾ endurable, silence is scarcely possible."

With most of the battles of his career behind him, and with the greatest of all, the trial of Hastings, wearing along monotonously year after year, Burke's reputation was at ebb tide a quarter of a century after he had entered parliament. Then, as Guedella suggests above, he was precipitated into the lime-light again by the events of the French Revolution. Burke detested it in all its forms, but it enabled him to escape the "hunt of obloquy" and to become the toast of the crowned heads of Europe. In another connection he once wrote: "As to great and commanding talents, they are the gift of Providence in some way unknown to us. They rise where they are least expected."⁽²⁾

-
1. Phillip Guedella, "Mr. Burke And The Grand Manner", The Nation, January 30, 1926. Page 611.
(The passage is true and balanced, but the question might be raised as to whether the phrase "the grand manner" best describes Burke or Guedella.)
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 607.
Burke To Captain Woodford, February 11, 1791.

A renaissance of Burke's power and influence was the least expected of all things in the years immediately preceding the revolution in France.

Several biographers have made the error of supposing that Burke was violently opposed to the events in France from the very outset. Stephen seems to have fallen into this error when he wrote: "From the very first he (Burke) saw the glare of hell in the light which others took to herald the dawn of the millenium."⁽¹⁾ But an examination of Burke's correspondence in October, 1789, shows that this judgment is not quite true. Writing to Dupont at that time, he did question whether the French leaders were establishing freedom on the solid basis of justice, but he said:

"You may easily believe, that I have had my eyes turned with great curiosity, to the astonishing scene now displayed in France. It has certainly given rise in my mind to many reflections, and to some emotions. These are natural and unavoidable; but it would ill become me to be too ready in forming a positive opinion upon matters transacted in a country with the correct political map of which I must be very imperfectly acquainted.

Things indeed, have already happened so much beyond the scope of all speculation, that persons of infinitely more sagacity than I am, ought to be ashamed of anything like confidence in their reasoning upon the operation of any principle, or the effect of any measure." (2)

The reaction of two of Burke's contemporaries to the first events in France was to be significant for Burke. The first of these was Fox, who wrote two weeks after the fall of the Bastille: "How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the

-
1. Leslie Stephen, English Thought In The Eighteenth Century. Volume II, Page 245.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 557.
Burke to M. Dupont, October, 1789.

world! And how much the best."⁽¹⁾ As soon as Burke did discern "the glare of hell" in the new France, his rupture with Fox became inevitable. The reaction of the second Englishman to be noted is that of the dissenting minister, Richard Price. Price preached a sermon in November to the Revolution Society, in which he claimed that the events in France were simply the fulfillment of the principles of the Revolution of 1688 in England. Of that sermon Burke later wrote: "I went home, and, late as it was, before I went to bed, I read Dr. Price's sermon; and in that very sermon in which were all the shocking sentiments and seditious principles which I have endeavoured to expose..."⁽²⁾

By February of 1790 it was evident that Burke had passed from his earlier position of doubt, over into a position of militant opposition and bitter criticism. In that month he was speaking on the army estimates when he said: "The French have made their way, through the destruction of their country, to a bad constitution, when they were absolutely in possession of a good one."⁽³⁾ And again: "The natural mental habits of mankind are such, that the present distemper of France is far more likely to be contagious than the old one; for it is not quite easy to spread a passion for servitude among the people; but in all evils of the opposite kind our natural inclinations are flattered...our present danger is...a danger from anarchy, a

-
1. C. F. Fox's Correspondence. Volume II, Page 361. Fox to Fitzpatrick, who was leaving for Paris. July 30, 1789.
 2. Works, Volume II, Page 67.
Burke to William Weddell, January 31, 1792.
 3. Works, Volume IV, Page 142.
Speech On The Army Estimates, 1790.

danger of being led, through an admiration of successful fraud and violence, to an imitation of the excesses of an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy."⁽¹⁾

The next month Fox moved the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and Burke rose in opposition. He had at one time championed the cause of relief for the dissenters, but now he believed them to be enamoured of the new French doctrines. Furthermore, they were attacking the established church, and thus were undermining the fundamentals of the constitution. His whole speech was a preview of his most famous work, Reflections On The Revolution In France, which was published in November. With its appearance, Burke became the spokesman for the Anti-Jacobin cause, and was launched on the last of his great crusades.

The Reflections passed through edition after edition, not only in England, but on the continent as well. It elicited some forty replies, perhaps the best known being that of Paine. Burke's defence of the old order drew the familiar retort from Paine: "He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird."⁽²⁾ Burke had asked in the Reflections: "Was the state of France so wretched and undone, that no other resource but rapine remained to preserve its existence? On this point I wish to receive some information."⁽³⁾

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 140.
Speech On The Army Estimates, 1790.
 2. Thomas Paine, Rights of Man.
Complete Writings of Paine. (Ed. Foner).
Volume I, Page 260.
 3. Works, Volume IV, Page 247.
Reflections.

Had Burke been sincere in this question, instead of so deeply convinced, he might have found grounds for tempering his polemics. On this point Stephen rightly chides him for "his incapacity to answer the obvious question, What is the genealogy of this monstrous spectre? Repudiating the hypothesis that it was begotten by the spirit of resentment for intolerable grievances, it seemed strange that a false and degrading doctrine should suddenly attract proselytes enough to upset the strongest thrones."⁽¹⁾ The truth is that Burke was "persistently and almost ludicrously wrong in his detailed estimate of the state of French affairs."⁽²⁾

The influence which Francis exercised over Burke has already been noted. Before the Reflections were published, Burke had sent Francis a rough draft, asking for his reactions, and Francis wrote: "I am not sufficiently versed in the history of that country to be able to point out a period in which the French possessed an effective constitution; or even such an acknowledged system of tolerable government, as it would have at all availed them to recur to in their late situation...when I speak of a nation, I mean the millions who asked for nothing but protection against intolerable oppression...against these millions the king and the nobles, and the church too, I fear, had a common interest."⁽³⁾ Thus Burke's most intimate critic laid before him the two facts of "intolerable oppression" and

-
1. Leslie Stephen, *Op. Cit.*, Volume II, Page 250.
 2. Alfred Cobban, Edmund Burke And The Revolt Against The Eighteenth Century, Page 120-121.
 3. Works, Volume I, Page 587.
Philip Francis to Burke, November 3, 1790.

the absence of any constitutional settlement in France comparable to that of 1688 in England. To these points, Burke exposed the blind spot in his makeup, and went right on to preach "a crusade against men whom he regarded as the foes of religion and civilization."⁽¹⁾

The kings of Europe sent the author their congratulations, and even George III, despite Burke's conduct during the regency crisis, commended the work to the reading public of the whole country. Its decisive influence is indicated by a passage from P. Hume Brown, in which he refers to "that cleavage in European opinion regarding the French Revolution which exists to the present day, and of which Burke's Reflections was the dividing sword."⁽²⁾ Hunt says of it: "The opinion of the great majority of the nation with regard to the revolution in France was decided by the publication of Burke's Reflections."⁽³⁾

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine in any detail the charge of inconsistency which has been brought against Burke for his attitude toward the French Revolution. Priestly brought this charge forward immediately upon the publication of the Reflections. "It is with very sensible regret that I find Mr. Burke and myself on the two opposite sides of any important question, and especially that I must now no longer class him among the friends of what I deem to be the cause of liberty, civil or religious, after having, in a pleasing

-
1. John Richard Green, History Of The English People. Volume III, Page 91.
 2. P. Hume Brown, History of Scotland. Volume III, Page 378.
 3. William Hunt, The History of England, 1760-1801. Page 328-329. (Volume X in the series The Political History of England.)

occasional intercourse of many years, considered him in this respectable light."⁽¹⁾ The question has often been raised as to why the champion of the American colonies, of India, of the anti-slavery legislation, and of Catholic Emancipation, should have been so bitter a critic of the revolution in France. Many answers have been given, but the most familiar is that Burke saw in France a complete repudiation of her past, whereas the English Revolution of 1688 had made only those changes that were in conformity with the historical growth of her institutions.⁽²⁾ Another answer is that Burke was concerned with liberty purely as a national concept.

From the point of view of this study, that is, his attitude toward Christianity and toward the churches, Burke's position after 1789 is not inconsistent with the attitudes he had expressed throughout his life. This point will be developed more in detail in the closing chapters of the study. There is a significant passage from Lecky in which, after he has discussed Burke's attitude toward atheism, the test acts, and the established church, he states: "His attitude during the French Revolution was in reality only what might have been expected from the principles he had laid down in the earlier portion of his career."⁽³⁾

-
1. Joseph Priestly, Letters To The Right Honourable Edmund Burke Occasioned By His Reflections On The Revolution In France. The Preface, Pages iii-iv.
 2. Willey's comment in this connection is illuminating: "It is Burke's main distinction that, in an age which was willing to abolish history and amend human nature, he was alive to the inescapable power of both." Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, Page 248.
 3. William E. H. Lecky, Op. Cit., Volume V, Page 176.

The rift between Burke and Fox grew wider with each passing month. Burke could scarcely speak on any subject in the Commons without thundering against the proceedings in France, while Fox lauded the Revolution at every opportunity. During the debate on the Quebec Bill in May of 1791, Burke threw all caution to the winds and characterized the new French government as "a shapeless monster born of hell and chaos."⁽¹⁾ Fox himself rose and delivered a eulogy on the Revolution, charging Burke with inconsistency in refusing to the French people the rights he had championed for Americans. The open rupture had at last come. That summer Burke wrote his Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs which was both a rebuttal to criticisms of the Reflections and a rebuke to those who had followed Fox instead of himself as the advocate of true Whig principles.

The following year there was a petition before the House for the relief of the Unitarians, and Burke opposed it in a speech which will merit full examination later in this study. His chief point was that the Unitarians were not simply a religious group seeking relief for tender consciences, but had become in fact a political faction disaffected with the State. He had written in the Reflections of the dissenters who followed Price and Priestly: "Something they must destroy, or they seem to themselves to exist for no purpose. One set is for destroying the civil power through the ecclesiastical; another for demolishing the ecclesiastical through the civil. They are

1. Speeches, Volume IV, Page 32.
Speech On The Quebec Government Bill, 1791.



aware that the worst consequences might happen to the public
in accomplishing this double ruin of church and state."⁽¹⁾

His opinion of them had certainly not changed in the ensuing two years, so that he could say in 1792: "They declare they would persecute the heads of our church; and the question is, whether you should keep them within the bounds of toleration, or subject yourself to their persecution."⁽²⁾

The year 1793 saw two things come to pass which pleased Burke greatly. In February, France declared war on England, though Burke had made the plea several months before that English liberties could only be preserved by an immediate declaration of war. The second event was the passing of the Catholic Relief Act, which gave the parliamentary franchise to the Catholics of Ireland. In the previous year, Burke had written the influential Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe, in which he declared that:

"Whether a person's having no Christian religion be a title to favour, in exclusion to the largest description of Christians who hold all the doctrines of Christianity, though holding along with them some errors and some superfluities, is rather more than any man, who has not become recreant and apostate from his baptism, will, I believe, choose to affirm."⁽³⁾

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 197.
Reflections.
 2. Works, Volume VI, Page 105.
Speech On The Petition Of The Unitarians, 1792.
 3. Works, Volume IV, Page 521-522.
Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe, 1792.

The trial of Hastings, which had been stretched out interminably through all these years, was finally brought to a close in 1794. The trial had been all but eclipsed in the stir created by the events in France. Now, with war declared, Hastings' acquittal, which had been a foregone conclusion, was received in a mood which contrasted sharply with the fever of excitement with which the trial had opened eight years before. When the House of Commons had duly passed a vote of thanks to the managers of the trial, Burke retired from Parliament. In the same year, his son Richard was elected to his father's seat for Malton. With Fitzwilliam going to Ireland as Viceroy, Burke believed that one of his most cherished dreams, full Catholic emancipation, would speedily come to pass. The early summer of 1794 was probably the last happy period of Burke's life.

In August, his son Richard died, and Burke never fully recovered from the blow. He had been blind to Richard's shortcomings, which had been all too apparent to others, and between father and son there had existed a deep and lasting bond of affection. There is an unpublished letter among the Milton manuscripts, in which Burke writes: "We are otherwise as effectually buried as our dear son. We had no other way of using our existence or enjoying it, but through him."⁽¹⁾ Writing to an anonymous correspondent in the same year, Burke refers to Richard's death as "my poignant domestick

1. Burke to Abbe de La Bintinaye, September 5, 1794.
The Milton MSS Collection, now at Lamport Hall.

affliction, the most cutting perhaps that ever was inflicted on man."⁽¹⁾ The letter is signed: "the afflicted heart of your miserable friend, Edmund Burke."

Fanny Burney sensed the pathos of the event, coming, as she noted in her diary, at the moment of "the father's retreat to the bosom of his family from public life."⁽²⁾ Shackleton's widow wrote to Burke: "I wish dear friend it was in my power in any degree to alleviate thy distress, but thou knowst who alone can do that effectually."⁽³⁾ And her daughter, Mary Leadbeater, adds this note to the letter: "it proves this world is not our rest." Two years later Burke was asserting that Richard would have been a great public servant had he been spared: "But a Disposer whose power we are little able to resist and whose wisdom it behooves us not at all to dispute, has ordained it in another manner, and (whatever my querulous weakness might suggest) a far better... I am torn up by the roots, and lie prostrate on the earth! There, and prostrate there, I most unfeignedly recognize the Divine justice, and in some degree submit to it."⁽⁴⁾

Pitt had intended to propose a peerage for Burke, but upon Richard's death those arrangements naturally ceased. A pension was arranged which provided some relief from his pressing financial burden, though he was heavily in debt right on

-
1. The letter is in Burke's hand, and simply bears the date, 1794. The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay. (Fanny Burney). Volume VI, Page 30.
 3. Elizabeth Shackleton to Burke, October 5, 1794. The Milton MSS Collection, now at Lamport Hall.
 4. Works, Volume V, Page 236-237. Letter To A Noble Lord.

to the day of his death. The Duke of Bedford attacked his pension in the House of Lords, and drew from Burke his Letter To A Noble Lord, which Morley has styled, "the most splendid repartee in the English language."⁽¹⁾

By this time, Burke was viewing every development, both at home and abroad, from the sole standpoint of whether it was infected with the French doctrines. He knew that some of the Catholic leaders in Ireland were now the advocates of Jacobinism, and this hurt him deeply. "There is no rank or class into which the Evil of Jacobinism has not penetrated; and that disseminated contagion is infinitely more mischievous than if it had seized upon the whole of any one description -- for then the whole of some other would be enabled to act with Union, energy and vigour against it."⁽²⁾ Burke firmly believed that the central thrust of Jacobinism was against not only the establishment, but against all religion.

"My whole politics, at present, centre in one point, and to this the merit or demerit of every measure (to me) is referrible; that is, what will most promote or depress the cause of Jacobinism.

What is Jacobinism?...the Jacobins have resolved to destroy the whole frame and fabric of the old societies of the world, and to regenerate them after their fashion.

As the grand prejudice, and that which holds all the other prejudices together, the first, last, and middle object of their hostility is religion. With that they are at inextinguishable war. They make no distinction of sects. A Christian, as such, is to them an enemy." (3)

-
1. John Morley, Edmund Burke. (English Men of Letters Series). Page 200.
 2. Burke To Windham, November 17, 1794.
The Burke-Windham Correspondence, Page 176.
 3. Works, Volume VI, Page 42-43.
Burke To William Smith, 1795.

In 1796, Burke poured out the last vials of his wrath against the Revolution in his Letters On A Regicide Peace. The argument is an indignant protest against any proposal to negotiate with the powers in control in France, and a plea that England is well able to fight a long war. Two years earlier he had laid down the minimum conditions for treating with France: "When I see a fundamental change in its whole system, by the extinction of Jacobin clubs, by the re-establishment of religion, and the restitution of property on its old foundations, and when I see a government, whatever it may be, founded upon that property, and regulated by it, I shall then think France in a negotiable condition."⁽¹⁾

Burke knew he was approaching the end of his career when he wrote the Letters On A Regicide Peace. "What I say, I must say at once. Whatever I write is in its nature testamentary. It may have the weakness, but it has the sincerity of a dying declaration."⁽²⁾ He was literally consumed by his flaming opposition to Jacobinism, and Pitt's endeavours to come to terms with the French filled his mind with horror. "We are at war with a system, which, by its essence, is inimical to all other governments, and which makes peace or war, as peace or war may best contribute to their subversion. It is with an armed doctrine that we are at war. It has, by its essence, a faction of opinion, and of interest, and of enthusiasm, in every country. To us it is a Colossus which bestrides the

-
1. Works, Volume II, Page 246.
Burke to Emperor Woodford, January 13, 1794.
 2. Works, Volume V, Page 319.
Letters On A Regicide Peace. (Letter I).

channel. It has one foot on a foreign shore, the other upon the British soil."⁽¹⁾ And always he returns to the religious issue: "This fanatical atheism left out, we omit the principle feature in the French Revolution."⁽²⁾

Toward the end of Burke's life, he certainly knew all "the distresses of the miserable great."⁽³⁾ With Richard in his grave, Fitzwilliam recalled from Ireland, and the war going badly, he had written in 1795: "My heart is sick; my stomach turns; my head grows dizzy. The world seems to me to reel and stagger. The Crimes of Democracy and the madness and folly of Aristocracy alike frighten and confound me. The only refuge is in God, who sees thro' all these mazes."⁽⁴⁾ The question must be raised again later in our study as to whether Burke found authentic sustaining power in his religious faith. Paul Elmer More said of Newman: "He beheld God, yet missed the peace of heaven."⁽⁵⁾ The phrase is equally descriptive of Burke's last years.

Buckle insisted that Burke's mind was really unbalanced toward the end. "When the crimes of that great revolution, (the French) instead of diminishing, continued to increase, then it was that the feelings of Burke finally mastered his

-
1. Works, Volume V, Page 263.
Letters On A Regicide Peace. (Letter I).
 2. Ibid. Page 333. (Letter II).
 3. This is Burke's own phrase which he used in citing the universal need for the consolations of Christian faith. Works, Volume IV, Page 234. Reflections.
 4. Burke to Mrs. Crew, March, 1795.
The Burke-Windham Correspondence. Page 157.
 5. Paul Elmer More, Pages From An Oxford Diary, Page 7.

reason; the balance tottered, the proportions of that gigantic intellect were disturbed."⁽¹⁾ But one has only to read the Letter To A Noble Lord or the Letters On A Regicide Peace to discover that the old powers were still intact.

It is true that he sunk into extreme pessimism and melancholia after Richard's death. Of the events in the world he wrote the year before his own death: "We seem to me to be descending to the center of ruin with so accelerated a motion, thro' the thin medium of pusillanimity, disgrace, and humiliation, that it seems to be an attempt to fight with the established laws of nature to stop the course which things are taking."⁽²⁾ Of his own personal situation, he wrote to Lord Auckland: "I am perfectly sensible of the very great honour you have done me in turning any part of your thoughts towards a dejected old man, marked with the displeasure of the divine providence, and buried in the recesses of an obscure and melancholy retreat."⁽³⁾

In December of 1796, Burke wrote to Dr. Hussey at Maynooth: "I cannot conceal from you, much less can I conceal from myself, that in all probability I am not long for this world."⁽⁴⁾ In February, he went down to Bath in the hope that the milder climate would give him some relief. From Bath he wrote in March: "The condition of publick affairs is far from conducing to my comfort. I shall say nothing of England, which by the

-
1. H.T.Buckle, History Of Civilization In England. Volume I, Page 378.
 2. Burke to Windham, September 11, 1796. The Burke-Windham Correspondence, Page 202.
 3. Burke to Lord Auckland, undated, almost certainly 1796. The Milton MSS Collection, now at Lamport Hall.
 4. Burke to Dr. Hussey, December, 1796. Works, Volume II, Page 341.

efforts of two factions discordant in their affections and interest, but agreeing in their false principles, is going its own way to destruction. Ireland is not only emulous of these proceedings, but goes far beyond them."⁽¹⁾ His whole world seemed to be hastening to its dissolution.

Burke did not improve at Bath, and in May returned to Beaconsfield to await the end. He had written to Shackleton's daughter, Mary Leadbeater, informing her that his illness was terminal. Six weeks before his death, he received this reply from the old Quaker home in Ballitore: "My mother desires thou may accept as much love as she is capable of sending thee, her heart is full of it toward thee, and she bids me say, she hopes thou has lived such a life that thy end will be crowned with peace. So be it saith my whole heart."⁽²⁾ He died on July 9, 1797, and his own words may be used to describe his end: "Worn out by age, grief, and infirmity, and condemned to perpetual retreat."⁽³⁾

-
1. Burke To An Anonymous Correspondent, March 16, 1797. The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Mary Leadbeater to Burke, May 28, 1797. The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield. (The letter is reproduced with errors in transcription in Burke's Works, Volume II, Page 399).
 3. Burke To the Prince of Wurtemberg who had expressed a desire to see him at Bath. April 28, 1797. The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.

CHAPTER II

BURKE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD CHRISTIANITY

- A. Introduction to Burke's Religious Thought.
- B. Burke's Attitude Toward Deism And The Role of Reason.
- C. The Religious and Sinful Nature of Man.
- D. The Bible, Its Nature and Authority.
- E. The Wedding of Religion With Morality and Duty.
- F. Burke's Views on Toleration.
- G. Providence In History, An Assured Conviction Not Subjectively Appropriated.
- H. Judgment and Immortality.
- I. Burke's Personal Religion and Integrity.

A. Introduction To Burke's Religious Thought.

The ascendancy of the religious motif in Burke runs right through all his works. From his earliest schoolday letters, through his philosophical discourses, during his years on the floor of the house of Commons, and on to the feverish writings of the last scenes, there is always the conditioning background of an intensely religious frame of reference. The mystical note is not uncommon in adolescence, so that when he wrote the following poem at the age of fifteen it is simply an overt expression of that "God consciousness" of his home life and the days at Ballitore.

"While each harmonious warbler of the sky
Sends up its grateful notes to thank the high,
The mighty Ruler of the world below,-- (1)
Parent of all, from whom our blessings flow."

Even the uncritical reader will recognize that such poetry is of somewhat less than epic proportions and that the religious perception it contains is untrammelled by theological speculations. However, in the same year, when a flood in Dublin confined Burke to his home for several days, he wrote to Shackleton:

"I considered how little man is, yet, in his own mind, how great! He is lord and master of all things, yet scarce can command anything. He is given a freedom of his will; but wherefore? Was it but to torment and perplex him the more? How little avails this freedom, if the objects he is to act upon be not as

1. Works, Volume I, Page 2.
The poem appears in a letter from Burke to Richard Shackleton, January 9, 1744.



much disposed to obey as he to command! What well laid, and what better-executed scheme of his is there, but what a small change of nature is sufficient to defeat and entirely to abolish? If but one element happens to encroach a little on the other, what confusion may it not create in his affairs! What havoc! What destruction! The servant destined to his use confines, menaces, and frequently destroys this mighty, this feeble lord." (1)

In that passage we see the lad of fifteen years is concerned with the perplexing problems of freedom and contingency. That last sentence comes from a mind already engaged in contemplating "the grandeur and the misery of man." From the childlike faith of the poem, and from this early concern with the nature and destiny of man, it is a long way to the faith expressed in the Reflections. "The body of all true religion consists, to be sure, in obedience to the will of the Sovereign of the world, in a confidence in his declarations; and in imitation of his perfections. The rest is our own." (2) At every nodal point of that long pilgrimage the religious consciousness of the man is revealed in his works. It is precisely this which enabled Cobban to declare that Burke manifested "from beginning to end a religious spirit and devout temper rare in an eighteenth-century politician." (3)

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 7.
Burke to Richard Shackleton, January 25, 1744.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 281.
Reflections.
 3. Alfred Cobban, Edmund Burke And The Revolt Against The Eighteenth Century, Page 238.

Burke never put himself under the necessity of proving his religious assumptions. To him, the greatest fact of life was simply the fact of God. The existence of God was as self-evident as the existence of the physical world. It is in his earliest philosophical treatise that this faith is set forth. "Now, though in a just idea of Deity, perhaps none of his attributes are predominant, yet, to our imagination, his power is by far the most striking. Some reflection, some comparing, is necessary to satisfy us of his wisdom, his justice, and his goodness. To be struck with his power, it is only necessary that we should open our eyes."⁽¹⁾ To many who have earnestly sought a religious faith, the opening of the eyes has simply revealed a world that forbade faith in God. But, as we shall see later in this chapter, Burke saw God's hand in everything.

Not only is his religious faith manifested "from beginning to end", and not only is the fact of God self-evident to Burke, but there appears to be no period in his life when this faith in the existence of God was shaken. It will be a matter for our concern later in this chapter to inquire whether he consistently allowed this faith to buoy his spirits and to give him an assurance of adequacy for facing life. The point to be seen clearly at this juncture is that no problem of ultimate doubt appears to have presented itself at any time. As we saw in the first chapter, the death of his son

1. Works, Volume II, Page 606.
Sublime and Beautiful.

Richard was probably the most devastating personal blow he ever received. Even under that burden he could write to Windham: "When you please to retire for a day or two, here is a place not incommodious to you. You will find your friends fewer by the dreadful but just act of God."⁽¹⁾

While no dark hour of uncertainty appears to have assailed his inner sanctuary, still he could write in his notebook a passage which, although the specific situation which elicited it remains unknown, is relevant to the psychology of religious doubt. "To have the mind a long time lost in doubts and uncertainties may have the same effect on our understanding that fermentation has on liquors. It disturbs them for a while, but it makes them both sounder and clearer ever after."⁽²⁾

Consistently viewing the world from a religious frame of reference, assuming the existence of God to be self-evident to all observing minds, and experiencing no prolonged period of mental doubts concerning these assumptions, Burke stands as one of the few men with the marks of genius in the eighteenth century for whom the ship of religious certainty never once struck sail. It is within this framework that we must now proceed to trace the particular facets of his faith.

-
1. The Burke-Windham Correspondence, Page 144-45.
Burke to Windham, December 22, 1794.
 2. From An Essay Entitled, "Several Scattered Hints Concerning Philosophy And Learning Collected From My Papers". In a notebook kept by Edmund And William Burke, The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.

B. Burke's Attitude Toward Deism And The Role of Reason.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, when Burke was making his first attempts to set down his thoughts on religion, the conditioning factor of deism was already in decline. However, it had done its work and the chill hand of a faith which gave to God only emeritus status had confined evangelical fervor to the fringes of the church. Deism lived on like a cut flower in a drawing room. It still retained its pristine attractiveness for some minds, but it was no longer a vigorous and growing plant. At the age of twenty-seven Burke was so familiar with Bolingbroke that his imitation of the latter's style baffled even the critics who thought Burke's Vindication Of Natural Society was a post-humous publication from the pen of Bolingbroke. On the basis of this familiarity he wrote: "Nothing could be more fatal to mankind than his (Bolingbroke's) (1) success."

This position, taken in his early writings, is developed more and more with the years. Hence Morley's strong sentence: "He always expressed the utmost contempt for those writers who are summarily classed in modern phrase as the Eighteenth (2) Century Deists." It remained for the mature years of the

-
1. Works, Volume II, Page 515.
Preface To Vindication Of Natural Society.
(Of course all close students of the eighteenth century have recognized Bolingbroke's influence on Burke's political thought.)
 2. John Morley, Edmund Burke, A Historical Study, Page 33.

Reflections to see Burke naming those whom he accused of undermining the true religion. In speaking of the French writers whom he labeled as "atheists and infidels" he asks the question: "Who, born within the last forty years, has read one word of Collins, and Toland, and Tindal, and Chubb, and Morgan, and that whole race who called themselves Free-thinkers? Who now reads Bolingbroke?...In as few years their few successors will go to the family vault of 'all the Capulets'."⁽¹⁾

Cobban has attempted to explain the basis of deism's strength in a single sentence. "Deism thus provided all the useful services of Christianity at a much cheaper rate and with fewer drafts on credulity."⁽²⁾ The point is that this would simply have no appeal for Burke, for, as we shall see, he never asked the ultimate questions which might make faith less tenable. The fact is that this attitude prevailed in both his religious and his political thought. In the preface to the Vindication Of Natural Society he specifically shows his purpose to be that of laying bare the dangers of such questioning. "The design was to show that, without the exertion of any considerable forces, the same engines which are employed with equal success for the destruction of religion, might be employed with equal success for the subversion of government; and that specious arguments might be used against those things which they, who

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 223-24. Reflections.

2. Alfred Cobban, Op. Cit., Page 26.

doubt of everything else, will never permit to be questioned."⁽¹⁾
Again we see this fear of the questioning mind in the sentence: "It has been the misfortune (not as these gentlemen think it, the glory) of this age, that everything is to be discussed."⁽²⁾ The problems which forced some honest minds to take refuge in deism never troubled Burke, hence he could hold them in "the utmost contempt" for with them he never had the least intellectual rapport, much less solidarity.

When we turn to the role of reason, however, we are in that climate of religious thought which no one in the eighteenth century could escape. The work which first brought Burke into prominence, The Sublime And Beautiful, was begun when he was nineteen and published during his middle-twenties. In it the budding philosopher wrote:

"The more accurately we search into the human mind, the stronger traces we every where find of his wisdom who made it. If a discourse on the use of the parts of the body may be considered as a hymn to the Creator; the use of the passions, which are the organs of the mind, cannot be barren of praise to Him, nor unproductive to ourselves of that noble and uncommon union of science and admiration, which a contemplation of the works of infinite wisdom alone can afford to a rational mind; whilst, referring to Him whatever we find of right or

-
1. Works, Volume II, Preface To Vindication of Natural Society. Page 515.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 225. Reflections.

good or fair in ourselves, discovering his strength and wisdom even in our own weakness and imperfection, honouring them where we discover them clearly, and adoring their profundity where we are lost in our search, we may be inquisitive without impertinence, and elevated without pride; we may be admitted, if I may dare to say so, into the counsels of the Almighty by a consideration of his works."⁽¹⁾

This philosophical work earned for its author the commendation of Hume and Lessing. Whether they would have continued their praise when he condemned the questioning spirit of the age is quite another question. But this concern with the role of reason followed Burke to the floor of the Commons and in one of his early speeches he said: "It is impossible for such poor weak creatures as we are to scan his works, or to scrutinize the conduct of that Being of whom Simonides justly said, that the more he considered his nature the more obscure and incomprehensive the subject became. We are not, however, on this account to discard reason altogether, and to forget the use of that guide which God has given us for direction. 'Est Deus in nobis'--'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us' when reason lifts up his voice, and points out the path that we should follow."⁽²⁾

-
1. Works, Volume II, Page 595. Sublime and Beautiful. (If the terminology of systematics were to be forced upon Burke it would be pertinent to observe that this early treatise is the locus of his natural theology.)
 2. Speeches, Volume I, Page 98. Speech On The Clerical Petition For Relief From Subscription To The Thirty-Nine Articles, 1772.

But if The Age of Reason is the most descriptive phrase of eighteenth century religious life, Burke cannot be called a devotee of that way. He clearly put the springs of action beyond the reason: "Whenever the wisdom of our Creator intended that we should be affected with anything, He did not confide the execution of his design to the languid and precarious operation of our reason; but He endued it with powers and properties that prevent the understanding, and even the will; which, seizing upon the sense and imagination, captivate the soul before the understanding is ready either to join with them, or to oppose them."⁽¹⁾ Hume must have looked twice at that phrase "the languid and precarious operation of our reason" for it was foreign to the spirit of the age. No true disciple of the primacy of reason could have written: "That great chain of causes, which, linking one to another even to the throne of God himself, can never be unravelled by any industry of ours. When we go but one step beyond the immediate sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth. All we do after is but a faint struggle, that shows we are in an element which does not belong to us."⁽²⁾ Cobban might have used this evidence to document his thesis that Burke was in "revolt against the eighteenth century."

It must be remembered that the same century which witnessed the enthronement of reason saw also the ascendance of its bete noir under the name of "enthusiasm." Burke would permit no

1. Works, Volume II, Page 633. Sublime And Beautiful.

2. Ibid. Page 648.

divorcing of the two. "It is true indeed that enthusiasm often misleads us, so does reason too; such is the condition of our nature and we cannot help it. But I believe that we act most when we act with all the powers of our soul. When we use our enthusiasm to elevate and expand our reasoning, and our reasoning to check the roving of our enthusiasm."⁽¹⁾

As a rule the parson could always consider Burke to be on the side of the angels, but there must have been many clerics who would have taken offense had they seen these lines on reason and enthusiasm: "I know the clergy, shamed and frightened at the imputation of enthusiasm, endeavours to cover religion under the shield of Reason, which will have some force with their adversaries. But God has been pleased to give mankind an enthusiasm to supply the want of Reason. And truly Enthusiasm comes nearer the great and comprehensive Reason in its effects, tho not in the manner of operation than the common reason does, which works on confined, narrow, common, and therefore plausible topics."⁽²⁾ The churchman who prided himself on wearing the label of "moderate" might have been stirred to an immoderate reaction by that thrust!

When studying the thought of the century in which deism rested on its frozen framework the relation between the world and its Creator, and when reason was considered fully able to

-
1. From An Essay Entitled, "Religion Of No Efficacy Considered As A State Engine".
The notebook kept by Edmund and William Burke, The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Ibid.

spell out the divine meaning and purpose, it is refreshing to hear a voice declaring that the channel between God and man is still open. "God has given us a knowledge of himself and we believe that knowledge to be of some importance to us. We therefore ought not to imagine it impossible that he may be willing to give us some further knowledge of his Nature or his Will. Neither is it reasonable that we should judge it impossible for Him to find fit means of communicating this knowledge."⁽¹⁾

In a day that demanded rigorous and honest mental struggle to maintain religious faith in the face of the new learning, it must be set down that Burke was not a victor in that arena. At the height of his powers he was quite willing to confess that "he had afterwards (after school years) turned his attention to the reading of all the theological publications, on all sides, that were written with such wonderful ability in the last and present century; at last he thought such studies tended to confound and bewilder, and he dropped them, embracing and holding fast the Church of England."⁽²⁾

-
1. From An Essay Entitled, "Religion Of No Efficacy Considered As A State Engine".
The notebook kept by Edmund and William Burke, The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Speeches, Volume II, Page 179.
Report of Burke's Speech On The Protestant Association Riots of June 6, 1780.
(This statement should always be held in equal balance with Burke's panegyric on the Church of England which will be examined later in this study and with which Sykes concludes his treatise on the relation of church and state in the eighteenth century.)

The depths of profound speculation on the "mysterium tremendum" were not for him. "The schemes of God are inscrutable; his ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts. we must fall down prostrate in reverential silence, nor presume to question his dispensations, nor ask him, Why dost thou
(1)
so?" There is both reverence and retreat in that confession of faith.

1. Speeches, Volume I, Page 98.
Speech On The Clerical Petition For Relief From The
Subscription To The Thirty-Nine Articles, 1772.

C. The Religious And Sinful Nature Of Man.

It was a passionate creed with Burke that man was inherently religious. This religious factor was implanted by the Creator and therefore had just as much claim to an ontological existence as any other object in God's whole creation. It was indeed this fact of his religious nature which gave man status and dignity in the world. The claim to the supremacy of this tenet in Burke's creed is rivaled only by the anterior article, the existence of God. In one of the finest speeches which he made early in his parliamentary career he referred to "the glorious and distinguishing prerogative of humanity, that of being a religious creature."⁽¹⁾

The fear of God and the reverence which is due to religious institutions are reactions of the subject in accordance with his essential nature. "We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility. Why? Because when such ideas are brought before our minds, it is natural to be so affected."⁽²⁾ When Burke used the word "natural" he meant the order of things as God had created them.

In one of the fiercest sentences in the Reflections Burke summons this lifelong creed to buttress his attack on the new France. "We know, and it is our pride to know, that man is by

1. Works, Volume VI, Page 99.
Speech On The Bill For The Relief Of The Dissenters,
1773.

2. Works, Volume IV, Page 221. Reflections.

his constitution a religious animal; that atheism is against, not only his reason, but our instinct; and that it cannot prevail long." ⁽¹⁾ That is not a burst of unrestraint but simply the overflow from a reservoir that had been filling since childhood.

MacCunn, whose primary purpose is to delineate Burke's political philosophy, recognizes that this view of the religious nature of man is actually basic to his thinking on every problem. "It would be in vain to seek for a refutation of naturalism in the pages of Burke. He does not prove, he never dreams of proving that man is a religious animal, or that the object of religious faith is real. His religion is a faith, not a philosophy." ⁽²⁾ It was precisely this concept of man which enabled Burke to speak to his constituents at Bristol that precept which has since been worn thin by politicians: ⁽³⁾ "He censures God who quarrels with the imperfections of man."

But although Burke was the direct forerunner of the romanticist who wrote "trailing clouds of glory do we come", still he was student enough of the human heart to see that the clouds had become stained during their sojourn on this plane of existence. When scarcely beyond the age of innocency himself, and while still at school, we find him writing to his Quaker friend: "I don't like that part of your letter wherein

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 225. Reflections.

2. John MacCunn, The Political Philosophy of Burke, Page 138.

3. Works, Volume III, Page 411.
Speech At Bristol Previous To The Election of 1780.

you say, 'you had the testimony of well-doing in your breast.' Whenever such notions rise again, endeavour to suppress them. It is one of the subtlest stratagems the enemy of mankind uses to delude us, that by lulling us into a false peace, his conquest may be the easier."⁽¹⁾ The youthful admonition concerning sin continues: "We should always be in no other than the state of a penitent, because the most righteous of us is no better than a sinner. Pray read the parable of the Pharisee and the publican who prayed in the temple."⁽²⁾

It was many years later, when Burke was viewing himself as the defender of the faith, and of civilization itself, that he seemed to place the locus of sin in the flesh. "I have observed that the philosophers, in order to insinuate their polluted atheism into young minds, systematically flatter their passions, natural and unnatural. They explode, or render odious or contemptible, that class of virtues which restrain the appetite. These are at least nine out of ten of the virtues."⁽³⁾ No doubt that was inspired by a particular political situation which he wished to oppose but the doctrine has been widely held in every generation.

However, the concept of sin as pride, which finds more affinity with both the first and the twentieth centuries, has an able exponent in Burke. In his notebook we find this rather

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 6.
Burke To Richard Shackleton, November 1, 1744.
 2. Ibid. Page 6.
 3. Works, Volume I, Page 612.
Burke To M. De Rivarol, June 1, 1791.

remarkable passage, which has a certain Pauline or Augustinian flavor. "Almost every man, however problematical it may appear to others, take himself for a little God. If He be a great man then he is a Deity Majorum Gentium and so from the highest to the lowest. In consequence of this creed, any man who takes on himself any such attributes manifestly himself affronts this God, and can therefore never be loved or advanced by him, tho he should employ these very attributes in his service...an utter annihilation is the way to become considerable... the less this being has of his own, either in body or soul, understanding or will, the more completely he belongs to his Creator."⁽¹⁾

There is an echo of this doctrine of pride in the politician's remarks at Bristol: "Our subjects in America; our colonies; our dependents. This lust of party-power is the liberty they hunger and thirst for; and this syren song of ambition has charmed ears, that one would have thought were never organized to that sort of music."⁽²⁾ Since the relationship between Burke and his constituents was already strained, this declaration that pride was preventing a just appraisal of the situation in the colonies must have added salt to open wounds.

-
1. From An Essay Entitled "The Way To Preferment". The notebook kept by Edmund and William Burke, The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 440.
Speech At Bristol Previous To The Election, 1780.

Perhaps the statement of Burke's concerning sin which would find readiest acceptance in our generation came from his pen during his last years. "They who do not love religion, hate it. The rebels to God perfectly abhor the author of their being. They hate him 'with all their heart, with all their mind, with all their soul, and with all their strength.' He never presents himself to their thoughts, but to menace and alarm them. They cannot strike the sun out of Heaven, but they are able to raise a smouldering smoke that obscures him from their eyes."⁽¹⁾ It would be difficult to find a clearer delineation of "man in revolt."

Burke's anthropology then oscillates between the two foci of the religious and sinful nature of man. He no more departs from this view at any time than he departs from the conviction that God exists. "In his thought, ever religious at bottom, man is a creature bearing the taint of Original Sin--that frowardness, pride in self, and lust after innovation that came into being with Lucifer."⁽²⁾

-
1. Works, Volume V, Page 332.
Letters On A Regicide Peace (Second Letter).
 2. Alfred Cobban, Op. Cit., Page 84.

D. The Bible, Its Nature And Authority.

One of the most remarkable features of Burke's works is that wherever one begins to read he is soon struck with the familiarity with the Scriptures which is displayed in almost every sizeable document to come from his prolific pen. (1)

The same is true of his speeches on the floor of the house of Commons. The use which he made of Biblical material in politics will be a later consideration. It is only necessary to note here that his thorough knowledge of the Bible is apparent from even a cursory examination of his works. No doubt much of this acquaintance can be traced to the experience of his school days at Ballitore of which he once said: "He read the Bible there morning, noon, and night, and was the happier and better man for such reading." (2)

Knowledge of the Biblical narratives, however full that knowledge may have been, was no extraordinary mark in the eighteenth century, especially when one had come from a pious home and had been exposed to the Quaker discipline in the Scriptures. However, Burke's views on the nature of Biblical material was far in advance of many whose knowledge of the contents of the English Bible equalled or surpassed his own. In fact he seems at times to have anticipated the results of

-
1. Upon first beginning this study of Burke's religious thought the writer began to take down every citation of Scripture and every allusion to Biblical references. This procedure became quite impractical as the number of such references soon ran to several score, with the bulk of his works yet to be investigated.
 2. Speeches, Volume II, Page 179. Report of Burke's Speech On The Protestant Association Riots of June 6, 1780.

nineteenth century criticism. The critical problems raised in this single passage are legion:

"The Scripture is not one summary of doctrines regularly digested, in which a man could not mistake his way; it is a most venerable, but most multifarious, collection of the records of the divine economy; a collection of an infinite variety, of cosmogony, theology, history, prophecy, morality, apologue, allegory, legislation, ethics, carried through different books, by different authors, at different ages, for different ends and purposes. It is necessary to sort out what is intended for example, what only as narrative, what to be understood literally, what figuratively, where one precept is to be controlled and modified by another--what is used directly, and what only as argument ad hominem,--what is temporary, and what of perpetual obligation--what appropriate to one state, and to one set of men, and what the general duty of all Christians."⁽¹⁾

Burke saw clearly the necessity for sound training in other disciplines if one were to possess anything approaching an intellectual grasp of the Biblical data. "The Scripture is by no means an irrelative system of moral and divine truths; but it stands connected with so many histories, and with the laws, opinions, and manners of so many various sorts of people,

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 90.
Speech On The Petition Of The Anglican Clergy For Relief From Subscription To The Thirty-Nine Articles, 1772.

and in such different times, that it is altogether impossible to arrive to any tolerable knowledge of it without having recourse to much exterior inquiry. For which reason the progress of this religion (Christianity) has always been marked by that of letters."⁽¹⁾ Such a view of the nature of Scripture would save him from the charge of Biblical obscurantism even in the twentieth century.

All these references to the nature of the Biblical material provided solid documentation for his political thesis that the Anglican clergy should not be permitted to substitute a subscription to the Scriptures in place of the subscription to the thirty-nine articles. Why? Because "The Bible is one of the most miscellaneous books in the world, and exhibits by no means a regular series of dogmas, or a summary of religion proper, on account of its brevity and precision, to be subscribed by a public teacher."⁽²⁾

This critical attitude which Burke displayed toward the nature of the Scriptural data, commendable even from a twentieth century point of view, is rivalled only by the authority which he attached to the Biblical revelation. No doubt there were many in the Commons who heard the above remarks on the nature of Scripture as though they were attacks on the stronghold of the faith. But even the fundamentalists in the galleries must

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 225.
Essay Towards An Abridgement of English History.
 2. Speeches, Volume I, Page 98.
Speech On The Clerical Petition For Relief From
Subscription To The Thirty-Nine Articles, 1772.

have considered him their champion when he said in the same speech, "The Scriptures, to be sure, contain the words of eternal life, and certainly furnish every thing necessary to salvation."⁽¹⁾ With that word of assurance the perennial species of heresy hunters could relax.

This expression of his views on the authority to be ascribed to the Scriptures was not a child of political expediency. Before he had ever stood for election he had written the philosophical discourse Sublime And Beautiful. All through the argument of that piece Burke had taken his stand on the revelation in the Bible. The foundation of his cosmology is the authority he attached to the Scriptures as the divine revelation of truth. But Burke knew that to anyone who ascribed authority to the Biblical revelation a prior question must be put:

"What is his Canon? The Jewish--St. Jerome's--that of the Thirty-Nine Articles--Luther's? There are some who reject the Canticles, others six of the Epistles,-- the Apocalypse has been suspected even as heretical...Therefore to ascertain Scripture you must have one article more; and you must define what that Scripture is which you mean to teach."⁽²⁾

His use of Biblical material in political argument gains weight from this brief view of the authority which he attached to the Scriptures. Any politician can quote Scripture to

-
1. Speeches, Volume I, Page 98.
Speech On The Clerical Petition For Relief From
Subscription To The Thirty-Nine Articles, 1772.
 2. Ibid. Page 89-90.

insure the "God and family" vote, but Burke consistently buttressed his argument by weaving into it a Biblical point of view. Pleading in the Commons for the relief of the Dissenters, he points out that since the Established Church has been set free from the Church of Rome it should grant the petition before the House. His argument is a blending of church history with a New Testament parable:

"It is not a proud prelate thundering in his commission court, but a pack of manumitted slaves with the lash of the beadle flagrant on their backs, and their legs still galled with their fetters, that would drive their brethern into that prison-house from whence they have just been permitted to escape. If, instead of puzzling themselves in the depths of the Divine counsels, they would turn to the mild morality of the Gospel, they would read their own condemnation--'O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?'"⁽¹⁾

His speech on American taxation will always rank among the finest delivered on the floor of either house. This piece of rebuttal which Burke wove into his presentation shows his ability to choose the apt Biblical reference and to thrust it home in the midst of the argument. "A noble Lord...has said that the Americans are our children, and how can they revolt against

1. Works, Volume VI, Page 95.
Speech On The Relief Bill For Dissenters, 1773.

their parent? They are 'our children' but when children ask for bread we are not to give a stone."⁽¹⁾ Again, when writing to the Sheriffs of Bristol on the American problem he argues: "For as the Sabbath (though of divine institution) was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, government, which can claim no higher origin or authority, in its exercise at least, ought to conform to the exigencies of the time, and the temper and character of the people with whom it is concerned and not always to attempt violently to bend the people to their theories of subjection."⁽²⁾

It is not infrequent to find a politician who is familiar with the Bible, and many statesmen have sincerely held to the authority of Scripture as tenaciously as did Burke. But it is indeed rare to find an eighteenth century political figure with such a scholarly and critical approach to the nature of the Biblical data, combined with a high view of the authority of the Biblical revelation. When these two factors were wedded to parliamentary acumen the result was often a Biblical point of view being brought to the affairs of state. In this whole area of the nature, authority, and use of the Scriptures, Burke attained the stature of a Christian scholar in politics.

-
1. Works, Volume III, Page 220.
Speech On American Taxation, 1774.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 332.
Letter To The Sheriffs Of Bristol, 1777.

E. The Wedding Of Religion With Morality And Duty.

Every high religion has always carried with it the concomitant of moral obligation. Many who have renounced religion on the grounds of its incompatibility with their intellectual presuppositions have nevertheless maintained a high ethical code and have strenuously fulfilled moral obligations far beyond the achievements of many who cling tenaciously to their religious faith. It is not the problem of this study to trace the history of this conflict or to indicate possible approaches to a reconciliation, but it is basic to our understanding of Burke to grasp the indissolubility of religion and morality which characterized his thought.

Within the private circle of his own family he once wrote to his son Richard: "When men are driven from any of those principles on which they have received religion, without embracing with the same assurance and cordiality some other system, a dreadful void is left in their minds, and a terrible shock is given to their morals."⁽¹⁾ The phrase "some other system" may not refer necessarily to a religious system of thought, but the fact that a void is created when faith abdicates is clearly his point. In other writings he leaves no room to doubt as to his meaning. "In the place of all this (religious restraint) they (the French philosophers) substitute a virtue which they call humanity or benevolence. By these means their morality has no idea in it of restraint, or indeed of a distinct settled

1. Works, Volume VI, Page 57.
Burke To His Son Richard. (undated, probably 1792 or 1793).

principle of any kind. When their disciples are thus left free, and guided only by present feeling, they are no longer to be depended upon for good or evil."⁽¹⁾

When he was writing on the policy of the allies in 1793 it is true that Burke was grasping at every straw to strengthen his position. However, when he was basing his opposition to France on religious grounds he was simply being consistent with a point of view he had expressed throughout his life. "They (the French leaders) are atheists. This wretched opinion, by which they are possessed even to the height of fanaticism, leading them to exclude from their ideas of a commonwealth the vital principle of the physical, the moral, and the political world, engages them in a thousand absurd contrivances to fill up this dreadful void."⁽²⁾

The forsaking of religious faith not only creates this "dreadful void" but the presence of faith positively enriches the quality of personal relationships. This conviction was so integral to Burke's thinking that it was perfectly natural for him to give expression to it even in a letter of condolence. On the death of his old Quaker friend and schoolmate, Richard Shackleton, Burke wrote to his daughter: "He sanctified his family benevolence, his benevolence to society, and to his friends, and to mankind, with that reference in all things to the Supreme Being, without which the best dispositions and

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 612.
Burke to M. de Rivarol, June 1, 1791.
 2. Works, Volume V, Page 39.
Remarks On The Policy Of The Allies, 1793.

the best teaching will make virtue, if it can be at all attained, uncertain, poor, hard, dry, cold, and comfortless."⁽¹⁾ That point of view always deserves a hearing, but just a year earlier Burke had been so excessive in his statement on this point that it could scarcely carry conviction: "Those who have denied the God of humanity, and made the apotheosis of Voltaire, are deprived of all the feelings of nature and grace. They cry: 'Give unto us Barabbas'."⁽²⁾

Not only did he view the absence of religious faith as the great weakness in the armor of the new France, and not only did Burke see the warmth and fervor of his Quaker friends as being due to their devotional life, but he felt a compulsion to warn England of the dangers that would beset her if she should ever abandon her traditional policy of benevolence toward Christian institutions. "If...we should uncover our nakedness, by throwing off that Christian religion which has hitherto been our boast and comfort, and one great source of civilization amongst us, and among many other nations, we are apprehensive (being well aware that the mind will not endure a void) that some uncouth, pernicious and degrading superstition might take the place of it."⁽³⁾

When we remember the reception given to the Annual Register and the wide circulation which it speedily attained, it will be seen that Burke was reaching a comparatively wide reading public

1. Works, Volume II, Page 137.
Burke To Mrs. Mary Leadbeater, September 8, 1792.
2. Works, Volume I, Page 614-15.
Burke To Marquis de Bouille, July 13, 1791.
3. Works, Volume IV, Page 225. Reflections.

even before he entered political life. One of the finest statements on that much mooted question of the relation between faith and works in Christianity was circulated in the issue for 1760. "As the belief of a God is the foundation of all religion, there can be no religion without faith; but, as true religion includes virtue, religion cannot be perfected without works. There is the same difference between faith and works, that there is between believing that a man is poor, and relieving him: you will not relieve him if you do not believe he is poor, but if you believe him poor, and do not relieve him, you may as well believe nothing at all about him."⁽¹⁾

It was of course particular political situations which usually elicited his finest statements. Like many brilliant writers he seemed to be at his best when writing at white heat. Nowhere is this more evident than when Burke is making his Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs. Nowhere else does his statement of the indissoluble relation between religion and morality take on such luminous quality. "I allow, that if no supreme ruler exists, wise to form, and potent to enforce, the moral law, there is no sanction to any contract, virtual, or even actual, against the will of prevalent power. On that hypothesis, let any set of men be strong enough to set their duties at defiance, and they cease to be duties any longer. We have but one appeal against irresistible power--

"Si genus humanum et mortalia temnitis arma,
At sperate Deos memores fandi atque nefandi"(2)

-
1. Annual Register, 1760, Page 205.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 460.
Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs, 1791.

With morality thus firmly anchored to the rock of ages, it will come as no surprise to learn that any high sense of personal duty in Burke will be the direct result of this relationship in which man stands to God. Even the novice in the thought of the eighteenth century will know that Burke assumed his full stature in the political arena with the publication in 1770 of Thoughts On The Cause Of The Present Discontents. Ever since that work appeared, politicians and political moralists have quoted the passage: "Public life is a situation of power and energy; he trespasses against his duty who sleeps upon his watch, as well as he that goes over to the enemy."⁽¹⁾ Of similar renown is this fine sentence from the debate on the East India Bill: "The situation of man is the preceptor of his duty."⁽²⁾

The lines which immediately precede that last quotation deserve to be as equally well known for they point to the source of duty. "All these circumstances are not, I confess, very favourable to the idea of our attempting to govern India at all. But there we are: there we are placed by the Sovereign Disposer; and we must do the best we can in our situation."⁽³⁾ There is the origin of duty for Burke--the God who has placed men in positions of responsibility and power.

-
1. Works, Volume III, Page 173.
Thoughts On The Present Discontents, 1770.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 469.
Speech On Fox's East India Bill, 1783.
 3. Ibid. Page 469.

The performance of duty often demands personal risk, and for Burke there is but one sure source of courage. Those in power in France were liquidating their opposition by systematically eliminating this source. "Your despots govern by terror. They know that he who fears God fears nothing else; and therefore they eradicate from the mind, through their Voltaire, their Helvetius, and the rest of that infamous gang, that only sort of fear which generates true courage."⁽¹⁾

To those who would take the legalistic view that moral obligation does not exist except where there is a mutuality of agreement, Burke has a blistering word. There are obligations which exist anterior to every voluntary agreement and which pass judgment on any agreement which might threaten their sanctity. "We have obligations to mankind at large, which are not in consequence of any special voluntary pact. They arise from the relation of man to man, and the relation of man to God, which relations are not matters of choice. On the contrary, the force of all the pacts which we enter into with any particular person, or number of persons amongst mankind, depends upon those prior obligations."⁽²⁾ It is inherent in the Christian faith, and here we see Burke clearly grasping the proposition, that moral responsibility cannot be dissolved or legislated away, even by a mutual and voluntary compact which agrees to do so.

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 378.
Letter To A Member Of The National Assembly, 1791.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 460.
Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs, 1791.

Nothing can be more distasteful than the politician's polite gesture toward Jesus Christ when there is no accompanying intention to permit Jesus to be Lord. But Burke's use of such phrases as "the blood of the Saviour of mankind"⁽¹⁾ and "the Captain of our salvation"⁽²⁾ never suffers from lack of personal faith or a high ethical context. For this reason we conclude this section on the wedding of religion and duty by quoting a passage on the incarnation, bed-rock for the Christian understanding of duty.

"When the God, whom we adore, appeared in human form, He did not appear in the form of greatness and majesty, but in sympathy with the lowest of the people,--and thereby made it a firm and ruling principle that their welfare was the object of all government; since the Person who was the Master of nature chose to appear Himself in a subordinate position. These are the considerations which influence them (the Lords) which animate them, and will animate them, against all oppression; knowing that He, who is called first among them and first among us all, both of the flock that is fed, and of those who feed it, made Himself 'the servant of all'.⁽³⁾"

-
1. Works, Volume III, Page 321.
Letter To The Sheriffs Of Bristol, 1777.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 596.
Burke To William Windham, December 21, 1790.
 3. Works, Volume VII, Page 471.
Speech On The Sixth Day Of Impeachment Of Hastings.

F. Burke's Views On Toleration.

If Burke had been only a mediocre philosopher in an ivory tower, spinning out his views on nature, man, and God, or if he had been a parson whose discourses could scarcely influence affairs of state, his views on toleration would not be of great importance to the historian of the eighteenth century. But Burke's voice and pen were opinion-forming in England, and they were not entirely without influence on the continent, in an age when the problem of toleration was not only an open issue in the religious world but a burning political issue. Since Burke's views on toleration cannot be divorced from his attitude toward the churches, this aspect of his thought will be met again in the concluding chapters of this study. At this point, therefore, it will be necessary only to indicate the excellent Biblical and humanitarian bases for his position and the unfortunate limits within which his views were confined.

Having seen his mother's Roman Catholic faith suffer in Ireland for several generations, having sat at his school desk in that same country beside Huguenot children whose parents had taken refuge from the persecution which followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and having been educated under the Quaker discipline, it would be natural to expect his views to be broad and humane. If the problem could have been kept within the confines of religious thought, with a charitable attitude displayed toward those who differed from him, no doubt Burke could be considered as a forerunner of present day views. Such

isolation was patently impossible in the eighteenth century, for in that century the whole problem of religious liberty rapidly gravitated from a Biblical and religious claim, to a natural right, and that shift inevitably meant conflict. The only difference was that in earlier ages the issue had been joined on the field of battle while in the century which concerns our study the locus of conflict was the political arena.

In one of the first references to toleration which he made on the floor of parliament Burke started out boldly to defend a large view: "I may be mistaken, but I take toleration to be a part of religion. I do not know which I would sacrifice; I would keep them both; it is not necessary to sacrifice either."⁽¹⁾ It was that same speech which contained the classic peroration: "Toleration is good for all, or it is good for none."⁽²⁾ Just one year earlier he had made the point which still stands unre-
futed: "The very principle of toleration is that you will tolerate, not those who agree with you in opinion, but those whose religious notions are totally different. For what merit is there, I beseech you, in tolerating your own doctrines?"⁽³⁾
None at all."

Burke was appealing to the lessons of history when, in pleading for leniency on behalf of those who had taken part in the Protestant Association Riots of 1780, he reminded those

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 98.
Speech On The Bill For Relief Of Dissenters, 1773.
 2. Ibid. Page 95.
 3. Speeches, Volume I, Page 118.
Speech On The Bill For Relief Of Dissenters, 1772.

who were charged with executing justice on the offenders:

"Toleration is a new virtue in any country. It is a late ripe fruit in the best climates."⁽¹⁾ The riots, however, had been striking evidence that the fruit was not ripe at all. But, granting the argument at this point, Burke had clearly stated the method which should henceforth govern the religious zealots who would accept his just and fair proposition. "One may be right, another mistaken; but if I have more strength than my brother, it shall be employed to support, not oppress, his weakness; if I have more light, it shall be used to guide, not to dazzle him."⁽²⁾

His plea for toleration is not simply the "noblesse oblige" attitude of one who has no religious loyalties; nor is it the result of an uncritical reverence for all religious institutions. We have seen that he had fervent convictions and we shall see later that he could be scathing in his criticisms of the major church traditions. Convinced of the essential truths of Christianity, still he could plead for the toleration of every religious persuasion.

"I would give a full civil protection, in which I include an immunity from all disturbance of their public religious worship, and a power of teaching in schools as well as temples, to Jews, Mahometans, and even Pagans...Much more am I inclined to tolerate those whom I look upon as our brethern. I mean all those who profess our common hope, extending to all the reformed and unreformed churches,

-
1. Works, Volume V, Page 581.
Thoughts On The Approaching Executions.
 2. Works, Volume VI, Page 100.
Speech On The Bill For Relief Of Dissenters, 1773.

both at home and abroad; in none of whom I find anything capitally amiss, but their mutual hatred of each other." (1)

In all of this there is of course an active concern for the welfare of the state and the primal certainty that the continuation of the moral society rests upon religious presuppositions. The sincere Christian, however, will more readily give his consent to Burke's views on toleration when they are based on the New Testament. Burke was on solid ground when he wrote: "To a mind not thoroughly saturated with the tolerating maxims of the Gospel, a preventative persecution...might come recommended by strong, and apparently no immoral motives of policy." (2) That word of admonition concerning "a preventative persecution" is not irrelevant to the twentieth century.

This New Testament basis for toleration comes out again when Burke argues that the truth of Christianity can win through in any free and open discussion. In answer to a speaker who opposed granting relief to the dissenters, he said: "Toleration an attack on Christianity? What then, are we come to this pass, to suppose that nothing can support Christianity but the principles of persecution?...these very terms become the strongest reasons for my support of the bill; for I am persuaded that toleration, so far from being an attack upon Christianity; becomes (3) the best and surest support that possibly can be given to it."

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 266.
Burke to William Burgh, February 9, 1775.
 2. Works, Volume VI, Page 25. Tracts On The Popery Laws.
 3. Works, Volume VI, Page 92. Speech On The Bill For The Relief Of The Dissenters, 1773.

Thus far Burke sounds like a champion of toleration in the twentieth century, that is, if the question could still seem lively enough to command an inquiry. But to hail him in this bright light would be utterly to neglect the limits which he set to the discussion. It is one of the darkest pages on the record of his thought, and while his views on the subject were often nobler than those of the majority of his contemporaries, he left the field without vanquishing the foe of intolerance, either in his own mind or in the minds and passions of his age. Consider the savage nature of this studied peroration: "Do not promote diversity; when you have it, bear it; have as many sorts of religion as you find in your country; there is a reasonable worship in them all. The others, the infidels, are the outlaws of the constitution; not of this country, but of the human race. They are never, never to be supported, never to be tolerated."⁽¹⁾

Those words were spoken in the same speech in 1773 from which the classic lines on toleration quoted above were taken. Nearly twenty years later there is no evidence that his thought has made any progress on the subject: "Of all men, the most dangerous is a warm, hot-headed, zealous atheist. This sort of man aims at dominion, and his means are, the words he always has in his mouth, 'L'egalite naturelle des hommes, et la souverainete du peuple.'⁽²⁾" Clearly then it is not possible for his uncritical admirers to say that his hatred of atheism was born of his

1. Works, Volume VI, Page 99-100.
Speech On The Bill For The Relief Of The Dissenters,
1773.

2. Works, Volume IV, Page 579-80.
Thoughts On French Affairs, 1791.

fear of the French Revolution. That event simply prompted a reiteration of the opinion he had expressed nearly a quarter of a century earlier.

In delineating a domestic policy for the opponents of the new France to impose upon that country when it should finally be conquered, he returns to the same theme. "As the ancient Catholic religion is to be restored for the body of France, the ancient Calvinistic religion ought to be restored for the Protestants with every kind of protection and privilege...No man, under the false and hypocritical pretence of liberty of conscience, ought to be suffered to have no conscience at all."⁽¹⁾ Burke had convinced himself that "atheism (was) the great political evil of the time."⁽²⁾

As we shall see in the next chapter, Burke was heavily indebted to Locke, and in the matter of toleration one element in the latter's thought was well-learned by his disciple. Locke had written: "Those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the Being of a God. Promises, Commands, and Oaths, which are the Bonds of Human Society, can have no hold upon an Atheist. The taking away of God, tho but even in thought, dissolves all."⁽³⁾

It is not necessary to labor the point of Burke's restricted views on toleration further. Every careful student of the man has felt the deep chasm between those fine statements which we

-
1. Works, Volume V, Page 48.
Policy Of The Allies, 1793.
 2. Ibid. Page 48.
 3. John Locke, First Letter Concerning Toleration, Page 48.

first examined and the narrow confines he set to his thought. Stephen says: "He would strengthen faith by stifling free play of opinion; and forgets that a religion supported by a dread of awkward discussions must crumble when assailed by active opponents."⁽¹⁾

A critical admirer, MacCunn, states what is now common knowledge when he says of Burke's position that it has "happily become untenable. Of all methods for strengthening the religious bond of human society the prosecution of free-thinkers is the most forlorn."⁽²⁾

We take leave of this essential but unedifying investigation by quoting Burke's own words against him which we noted above: "What merit is there, I beseech you, in tolerating your own doctrines? None at all."

-
1. Leslie Stephen, English Thought In The Eighteenth Century, Volume II, Page 230.
 2. John MacCunn, Op. Cit., Page 114.

G. Providence In History, An Assured Conviction
Not Subjectively Appropriated.

In personal correspondence with intimate friends, on the floor of the Commons, and in the longer discourses to come from his pen, Burke returns again and again to a theistic interpretation of history. As we have seen, the God of deism who had handed the reins of history into the hands of man, was not the object of Burke's faith. God is an active agent engaged in fulfilling his purposes on the historical stage.⁽¹⁾ Osborn states that: "Following the publication of The Vindication of Natural Society, Burke devoted his attention seriously to history. The 'furor historicus' of his college days had been replaced by a deep appreciation of the significant role that the historical process had played in the moulding of national customs, ideals, and institutions. But it was even more than this. It was the unfolding of the Divine purpose in the universe."⁽²⁾

Burke urged his son Richard to cultivate this faith in providence when the latter was encountering the prejudice of many generations in Ireland in his capacity as agent for the Roman Catholics. "Be content to have done your best, and leave the rest to the Disposer of events."⁽³⁾ But it is his statement of this faith which he wrote when opposing peace with France which every biographer has seized upon: "It would not be pious error,

1. Burke's views on the whole sweep of Christianity in history appear in the Essay Towards An Abridgement Of English History.
2. Annie M. Osborn, Rousseau and Burke. Page 114.
3. Works, Volume II, Page 55.
Burke To His Son Richard, January 8, 1792.

but mad and impious presumption, for any one to trust in an unknown order of dispensations, in defiance of the rules of prudence, which are formed upon the known march of the ordinary providence of God."⁽¹⁾ Those words "the known march of the ordinary providence of God" come from a mind settled in a mature conviction. The phrase has found its way into the writings of many who wrestle with the problem of the interpretation of history within a theistic frame of reference.

In the trial of Hastings the accuser needed every argument of any weight that he could muster. His excesses on that occasion have been justly deplored by all sober-minded readers, but when he spoke of his faith in providence the tone color does not offend even the most fastidious. "If we are yet to hope for such a thing in the present state of the world, as a recording, retrospective, civilized posterity; but this is in the hands of the great Disposer of events; it is not ours to settle how it shall be."⁽²⁾ Just two years later the scene had changed from the affairs of empire to those of his personal finances. In his reply to a critic who had chided him about his pension, Burke wrote: "No man lives too long, who lives to do with spirit, and suffer with resignation, what Providence pleases to command, or inflict."⁽³⁾

The high place which the doctrine of providence held in his religious thought is best seen, not in these published

-
1. Works, Volume V, Page 324.
Letters On A Regicide Peace, (Letter II).
 2. Works, Volume VIII, Page 554.
Speech In Reply, Ninth Day, June 16, 1794.
 3. Works, Volume V, Page 245. Letter To A Noble Lord, 1796.

writings, nor in the speeches which moved both houses of parliament, but in his notebook which contains short essays on various subjects. In one of these he wrote: "To take away Providence would therefore be to take away Religion. The arguments against Providence are from our reasonings, observing a certain order in the works of God. (the deistic view) There is nothing at all in our natural feelings against it. There is a great deal in our natural feelings for it."⁽¹⁾

Upon reading that opening sentence, which equates providence and religion, and in light of the other declarations of faith which have been examined, it would be natural to expect their author to be able "to see things steady and to see them whole." A high doctrine of providence does not lessen the rigor of present difficulties, nor does it solve all the ambiguities of history, but anyone who holds to it with the fervor and tenacity of Burke should have a bulwark against the floods of melancholy and despair. The hiatus between his declared views on providence and his subjective appropriation of that faith becomes apparent from a full examination of his life and works.

As early as his forty-fifth year, when his reputation in parliament and his status as an author had both been solidly established, we find him writing this depressing confession to Rockingham. "Sometimes when I am alone, in spite of all my efforts I fall into a melancholy which is inexpressible, and to

1. From The Essay, "Religion Of No Efficacy Considered As A State Engine." The notebook kept by Edmund and William Burke, The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.

which, if I gave way, I should not continue long under it, but must totally sink; yet I do assure you that partly, and indeed principally, by the force of natural good spirits, and partly by a strong sense of what I ought to do, I bear up so well, that no one who did not know them, could easily discover the state of mind or my circumstances. I have those that are dear to me, for whom I must live as long as God pleases, and in what way he pleases. Whether I ought not totally to abandon this public station, for which I am so unfit, and have of course been so unfortunate I know not."⁽¹⁾

Granting that periods of personal melancholia and spiritual depression have been the experience of the saints, and making full allowance for the influence of Richard's death, still it is not easy to understand how Burke's often declared faith that God's hand controlled the processes of history can be reconciled with the dark view of national and international events which overshadowed the closing ten years of his life. "Thus, my dear William, we ought to make the most of the very short time we have to live, in the evil days upon which we have fallen. When the last stroke of ruin will come upon this Kingdom, I do not know exactly, but come it will, and at a period far from remote."⁽²⁾

MacCunn has an able summary of the problem. "So masterful is the force of his religious faith, that it becomes difficult to reconcile his fears for the future with a faith so masterful.

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 239.
Burke to Lord Rockingham, September 25, 1774.
 2. Burke To His Cousin William Burke, November 14, 1794.
The Milton MSS Collection, at Lamport Hall.

For if the experience of the past years bears witness so convincingly to Divine plan and agency, this surely might seem to carry the suggestion that the political theories of radicalism, especially if they be as ill-grounded as he declares them to be, are not likely to seriously turn aside the march of the providence of God."⁽¹⁾

There is one short passage from Burke's pen which neatly shows his own realization that faith in providence should be accompanied by trust. "If we depend upon any superior being it is reasonable that we should trust him, though we do not see the motives and tendencies of his actions."⁽²⁾ When that excerpt from his notebook is laid beside the following from one of his last letters, the tension between faith and its subjective appropriation is bared. "As any real recovery is a thing now out of the question...it is thought advisable whilst the thing is possible, that I should be removed by easy stages to Beaconsfield; there to finish my career along with that of the civil and moral world."⁽³⁾ To the last breath he was in revolt

1. John MacCunn, Op. Cit., Page 101.
2. From The Essay Entitled, "Religion Of No Efficacy Considered As A State Engine." The notebook kept by Edmund and William Burke, The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
3. Burke To An Anonymous Correspondent, May 22, 1797. The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.

against the spirit of the times, and his closing words were simply to bid time, God's sphere of action, to cease with him.
(1)

1. Morley, whose study of Burke is one of the finest, was quite in error about the tone color of the closing years of Burke's life. He wrote: "Now that the night was falling, (Burke's mind) did not let go its faith in the beneficent powers and processes of the Unseen Time."
John Morley, Edmund Burke, A Historical Study,
Page 312.

This shortcoming of Morley's work is quite understandable since he was closing his study with the Reflections and since he did not have access to manuscript material only recently made public.

H. Judgment And Immortality.

Modern depth psychology is reporting that many of the "long, long thoughts of youth" are concerned with death and the possibility of a life beyond. If this is true at the present time, no doubt the climate of religious discussion among adolescents during the eighteenth century was even more filled with terminology such as salvation, damnation, judgment, and immortality. Burke put all these concepts into a letter to Shackleton before he had reached his sixteenth birthday. "I am of your opinion, that those poor souls who never had the happiness of hearing that saving name shall in no wise be damned. But, as you know, my dear Zelim (Burke's affectionate name for his Quaker friend) there are several degrees of felicity--a lower one, which the mercy of God will suffer them to enjoy; but not anything to be compared to that of those who have lived and died in Christ."⁽¹⁾ That youthful concern about a future judgment carried straight through his life. Exactly half a century later he wrote to Windham: "I am now endeavouring to make up my accounts with my Creator. I am, almost literally, a dying man. I speak with all the freedom, and with all the clearness of that situation."⁽²⁾

Given his familiarity with the Bible, and from the background of these quotations from personal letters, it follows that this faith should sooner or later be brought into his political thought.

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 5.
Burke to Richard Shackleton, November 1, 1744.
 2. Burke To William Windham, October 16, 1794.
The Burke-Windham Correspondence, Page 138.

Perorations on the judgment of history can scarcely offend like the revelation of judgment in history so that Burke probably made no enemies by saying: "Even in the awful judgment of the world, at the last day, we are taught in the Scriptures, that God will condescend to manifest his ways to man."⁽¹⁾ Judgment at that safe distance is scarcely in the tradition of the prophecy of Amos or of the action of a carpenter in the temple. This is one weakness in Burke's position--judgment postponed loses its effect by losing half its terrors.

The flights of oratory which accompanied the Hastings trial were certain to be embellished with this theme. Burke saved this purple passage for his final speech. "When the devouring flames shall have destroyed this perishable globe, and it sinks into the abyss of nature, from whence it was commanded into existence by the Great Author of it--then, my lords, when all nature, kings and judges themselves, must answer for their actions, there will be found what supersedes creation itself, namely, Eternal Justice."⁽²⁾ But in a quieter moment we hear the calm certainty that judgment means a personal confrontation with the divine. "There is one thing, and one thing only, which defies mutation... I mean justice...emanating from the Divinity...and which will stand, after this globe is burned to ashes, our advocate or our accuser before the great Judge, when He comes to call upon us for the tenor of a well-spent life."⁽³⁾

-
1. Speeches, Volume II, Page 230. Report Of Burke's Speech On The Causes Of The War In The Carnatic. April 30, 1781.
 2. Speeches, Volume IV, Page 511. Concluding Speech In The Trial of Hastings, June 16, 1794.
 3. Works, Volume VIII, Page 555. Speech In Reply, Ninth Day of Impeachment of Hastings.

When we turn our investigation to Burke's views on immortality we are struck by the maturity of his concepts in the earliest of his writings. He was in his second year at Trinity College in Dublin when this significant insight was prompted by a temporary separation from Shackleton. "Our parting; if I may make such a comparison, is like the sensation a good man feels at the hour of his death. He is conscious that he has used his time to the best advantage, and now must, through the condition of human nature, depart. He feels, indeed, a little sorrow at quitting his friends, but is very much allayed by considering he shall see them all again."⁽¹⁾ This belief in immortality came out in that speech in 1773 which has by now become familiar to the reader as a rich source of his religious thought. Having spoken of judgment, the necessity of toleration, (strictly within the limits we have noted) and having discoursed on the nature and authority of the Bible, it was not extraneous to the argument that he should employ the expression: "life and immortality... so gloriously demonstrated by the Gospel."⁽²⁾

While the idea of immortality is not limited to Christianity, still we find a distinct New Testament motif in this reference to the death of his son Richard. "Just as he was on the point of demonstrating to the world what was so well known to me, and to a few others, it pleased the Great Disposer, who gave to him those powers and dispositions, to determine upon some other

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 8.
Burke To Richard Shackleton, February 3, 1746.
 2. Works, Volume VI, Page 98-99.
Speech On The Bill For The Relief Of The Dissenters,
1773.

sphere for their employment."⁽¹⁾

These expressions of faith in immortality, when based upon the Biblical narrative, go much further toward establishing rapport with classical Christianity than the inference which Burke draws from man's innate ideas of immortality. The notebook reveals this significant passage: "Man has ideas of immortality and wishes for it. He does not think he has ideas and wishes for no end. Hence he presumes he may be immortal."⁽²⁾

The proposition that the idea of a thing is forcible evidence for its existence belongs only to the history of philosophy. It is Burke's high doctrine of the authority of Scripture, not the force of his inferences, which appeals to the Christian as a sound basis for belief in immortality.

It is this aspect of his faith which gives some relieving light to the closing scenes of his life, for, as we have seen, his view of the external pageant of history grew ever darker. A few years before the end, when writing of "flying from this world" he referred to the future as being "in an unknown form, but in a better life."⁽³⁾ There is a fine passage in a personal letter to his friend Dr. Laurence, written exactly one year before Burke's death, in which he refers to the persisting sense

-
1. Works, Volume II, Page 264.
Burke To William Windham, December 30, 1794.
 2. From The Essay, "Religion Of No Efficacy Considered As A State Engine". The notebook kept by Edmund and William Burke, The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 3. Works, Volume V, Page 447.
Letters On A Regicide Peace. (Letter IV).

of Richard's passing, and the melancholy that has come upon him, but still the way ahead is lighted by faith in immortality and reunion.

"I am indeed aux abois: but as through the whole of a various and long life I have been more indebted than thankful to Providence, so I am now singularly so, in being dismissed, as hitherto I appear to be, so gently from life, and sent to follow those who in course ought to have followed me, whom, I trust, I shall yet, in some inconceivable manner, see and know; and by whom I shall be seen and known."⁽¹⁾ The final curtain was not drawn on the politician's dark fears, but on faith's beckoning light.

-
1. Works, Volume II, Page 313.
Burke To Dr. Laurence, July 28, 1796.

I. The Personal Religion And Integrity Of Burke.

The political value of judiciously-selected references to the Bible, God, and the Church, is as well known among the present generation of public figures as it has always been, but such allusions were certainly more at a premium in an earlier age than they are today. The careful student of men and affairs will never equate public confessions of faith on the part of a politician with the spiritual condition of his soul. In fact, the comparative infrequency of such references in the twentieth century is witness to the slow but steady growth of the plant of political scepticism which has happily accompanied the extension of the franchise. The very volubility of leaders of opinion in the earlier century makes it especially important that, when studying any one of the leading figures, a careful assise be made to discover whether there is any positive correlation between his public declarations of faith and his personal religion. The intellectual risks involved in taking anyone's spiritual temperature are obvious, but the obligation to make the attempt is inescapable.

If we accept the New Testament's primal concern with relationships as being indicative of personal religion, in distinction from propositional truth, though not in opposition to it, we will find it a profitable approach to Burke's inner sense of the divine. This relationship of trust is clearly stated in the schoolboy's letter. "Though I do lead a virtuous life, let it show me how low I am, and of myself how weak; how far from an independent being; given as a sheep into the hands of the great

Shepherd of all, on whom let us cast all our cares, for He
careth for us."⁽¹⁾

The sense of awe, combined with a sense of imminence, which all students of the psychology of religion insist is the beginning of personal religion, is to be found in the philosophical discourse on the Sublime And Beautiful. "Whilst we contemplate so vast an object (Deity), under the arm, as it were, of almighty power, and invested upon every side with omnipresence, we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before Him."⁽²⁾

Burke's high sense of moral duty, based solidly on his religious presuppositions, was the concern of the earlier section of this chapter. The implementation of the sense of moral obligation on the political stage will be traced in the chapter which follows. However, classical Christianity has always insisted that any legalistic approach to ethical action is foreign to the pristine faith of the New Testament. The somewhat wooden formula that acceptable works presuppose grace was aiming at a central truth. In his notebook Burke wrote of this aspect of man's relationship: "This relation betwixt God and man, is that, man has received several benefits but can return none. That he may suffer all manner of mischief but can return none, or by himself avert none. Therefore by no act can he perform this Duty,

1. Works, Volume I, Page 7.
Burke To Richard Shackleton, January 25, 1744.
2. Works, Volume II, Page 606.
The Sublime And Beautiful.

but he can by the sentiments of his mind. Where we have received good 'tis natural to praise. Where we hope good it is natural to pray. Where we fear evil 'tis natural to deprecate it."⁽¹⁾

A second fruitful approach to Burke's personal religion is to consider the atmosphere of freedom and naturalness which characterized his references to spiritual matters where no possible political connection or self-enhancing motive can be adduced. His letters to members of the family almost always have some note of spiritual encouragement or admonition. It is typical to find him writing to Richard when the latter was in France at the age of fifteen: "May God grant you every blessing! Remember Him first, and last, and midst. Keep yourselves (referring to Richard's schoolmate at Auxerre) constantly in his presence."⁽²⁾ This relationship with Richard in religious concerns continues in all the correspondence between the two, so that twenty years later the father wrote: "It is no news to you that our first and last prayers to God are for you. He loves you better than we do, and knows better than you or we do what is good for you."⁽³⁾

This naturalness and freedom of expression when writing in a religious vein characterizes his relationship with his brother

-
1. From The Essay, "Religion Of No Efficacy Considered As A State Engine". The notebook kept by Edmund and William Burke, The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 212.
Burke To His Son Richard, February, 1773.
 3. Works, Volume II, Page 135.
Burke To His Son Richard, September, 1792.

Richard. The latter had taken sick when he was out of the country in 1787 and when Burke received word of it he wrote: "Ill, and ill in winter, in poverty, and in exile! But God is all sufficient, and that we exist and exist with any degree of hope at all is a proof of it--for everything else that comes in the ordinary course is such that it is half a miracle renewed every day."⁽¹⁾ To Windham, who was facing a difficult situation, Burke once wrote: "As to yourself, you have my most ardent prayers that God would direct you through your reason to the best course."⁽²⁾ And again: "Good Night, and God bless you. We shall remember you and your colleagues in our private evening prayer; to God I commend you."⁽³⁾ The religious sincerity of Burke is indicated by these personal expressions which carry a note of authenticity. We will return to this question when we have considered the high degree of moral integrity which should be ascribed to him.

Stephen makes an observation concerning Burke which is indeed weighty. "The greatness of Burke as a thinker cannot be adequately appreciated without noticing the nobility of his moral nature."⁽⁴⁾ This citation is by one who took the entire

-
1. Burke To His Brother Richard, November 23, 1787. The Milton MSS, at Lamport Hall.
 2. Burke To William Windham, October 16, 1794. The Burke-Windham Correspondence, Page 130.
 3. Ibid. Page 177, November 17, 1795.
 4. Leslie Stephen, English Thought In The Eighteenth Century. Volume II, Page 222.

climate of thought in the eighteenth century for his canvass. That scope, and the early period in which he was writing, necessarily limited Stephen's grasp of details which is incumbent upon a close student of Burke's thought. Still, when we come to the critical work by Wecter,⁽²⁾ written with the source materials much more readily at hand, we find him entitling his closing chapter, "The Integrity of Edmund Burke", and giving that concept positive content by his carefully documented study, removing aspersions which had persisted with a strange tenacity even into the present century.

In common with many virtues which he possessed, this matter of his own moral uprightness suffered during his lifetime from Burke's own advertising of it. A sensitive reader will be somewhat offended by the histrionic nature of this self-defence which he made on the floor of the Commons: "I have hitherto shoved by the gilded hand of corruption, and endeavoured to stem the torrent which threatens to overwhelm this land; and from such temptations I pray God of his infinite mercy ever to preserve me."⁽³⁾ In a letter to Fitzwilliam he makes a point which is quite essential

-
1. Leslie Stephen, English Thought In The Eighteenth Century. Volume II, Page 222.
 2. Dixon Wecter, Edmund Burke And His Kinsmen. (A Study Of The Statesman's Financial Integrity And Personal Relationships).
 3. Speeches, Volume I, Page 150.
Speech On The Bill To Restrain The East India Company, 1773.

to a sense of honor but scarcely a matter to put into writing:
"I have the consolation of my own conscience."⁽¹⁾

The significant thing to note at this juncture is that his "moral stature" spring from the specifically religious soil of his mind. There is little doubt but that he consciously sought to be just the type of person Shackleton described to him shortly after he entered public life. The Quaker, to whom Burke always acknowledged indebtedness for his religious opinions, wrote to the budding politician: "I wish for thee, my dear friend, to be one of those lights shining in a dark Place. I crave it for thee in my solemn petitions, and I trust I am heard and answered. God Almighty incline thine heart to seek after that wisdom by which 'princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.'⁽²⁾"

Nearly a quarter of a century later, Burke undoubtedly felt he had been just that type of public figure. In writing to Windham in 1790 he described himself as having endeavoured "to wage, under the standard of the Captain of our Salvation, a war without quarter upon all cruelty and oppression, wherever they appear, in whatever shape, and in whatever descriptions of men."⁽³⁾ The old verbosity and self-commendation mar this confession of

-
1. Burke To Fitzwilliam, October 5, 1792.
The Milton MSS Collection, now at Lamport Hall.
 2. Richard Shackleton To Burke, March 16, 1769.
The Leadbeater Papers. Volume II, Page 107.
 3. Works, Volume I, Page 596.
Burke To William Windham, December 21, 1790.

faith, but still it was his faith, and he had largely waged just the kind of political warfare he was describing.

While we are not edified by his much speaking on the subject, the evidence seems unimpeachable that Burke's personal religion was sincerely held and that his moral convictions were loyally adhered to throughout his life. Claiming the events of history to be in the hand of God, he seemed toward the end to feel that hand was slackening, but of his own dependence upon God, and his assurance of a continuation of that redeemed relationship he seems never to have doubted. Both these aspects of his religious life are in this undated letter to his cousin William: "We must take what God is pleased to give us (and in his anger he deals very graciously toward us) with thankfulness. The general horizon has a lowering aspect in every quarter."⁽¹⁾

Proud, verbose, hot-headed, excessive in speech and manner so that he often offended his closest friends, still the judgment of intimate acquaintances and objective historians casts no dark shadows on his personal integrity. Even Fanny Burney, who was once in his intimate circle and who had made the arduous transition from eulogist to critic, wrote in her diary: "That he was upright in heart, even where he acted wrong, I do truly believe."⁽²⁾ When Grenville died, Burke pronounced somewhat of a

1. Burke To William Burke, Undated.
The Milton MSS Collection, now at Lamport Hall.
2. Diary And Letters of Madame D'Arblay (Fanny Burney),
Volume 6, Page 114.

panegyric upon his memory. Commenting on this eulogy, Winstanley writes: "But virtue, even though it is unattractive, deserves recognition; and the tribute paid by Burke was the offering of one righteous man to another."⁽¹⁾

1. D. A. Winstanley, Lord Chatham And The Whig Opposition, Page 366.

CHAPTER III.

THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF BURKE AS INFORMED BY HIS RELIGIOUS FAITH

- A. Burke's Place In The History Of Political Thought And His Religious Frame of Reference.
- B. The Primacy of Conservatism.
- C. Burke's Attitude Toward Change.
- D. Circumstances, Prudence, and Expediency.
- E. The Place of Abstract Theories and Rights.
- F. The Spiritual Nature of The State And The Theistic Ground of All Law.
- G. The Relation of Church and State.
- H. The Natural Aristocracy.
- I. Political Obligation Based On Responsibility to God.
- J. The Extension of The Principle of Political Obligation To The Empire.
- K. Burke's Humanitarian Motifs Grounded in Religious Faith.

A. Burke's Place In The History Of Political Thought
And His Religious Frame Of Reference.

Burke entered the arena of political life as the defender of the constitutional settlement of 1689. Locke had accomplished the basic task of justifying the Glorious Revolution which the despotism of James II had rendered necessary. But while Locke had thus laid the foundation for the subsequent constitutional government, it remained for the later generations of political thinkers to work out the implications of his theories and to erect the super-structure. This transition from the drawing of the blueprint to the erection of the temple of political wisdom could not be effected without the halting, groping, fitful, awkward mannerisms so characteristic of any constitutional government in its adolescent stage.

The times demanded a union of the sound philosophy of 1689 with practical political savoir-faire. That Burke recognized this need is no mark of divination; it was as obvious as his Irish brogue. His statement of the problem, however, is a classic:

"It is the business of the speculative philosopher to mark the proper ends of government. It is the business of the politician, who is the philosopher in action, to find out proper means toward those ends, and to employ them with effect."⁽¹⁾

1. Works, Volume III, Page 170.
Thoughts On Present Discontents.

The individual in whom such a union obtains is likely to meet the fate described by Cobban: "A political philosopher who is also a practical politician is apt to be regarded as somewhat of an anomaly and to be treated accordingly by other politicians during his life and by philosophers after his death."⁽¹⁾ Burke was not to escape this end as we shall see in the subsequent pages of this study.

That Burke built upon Locke is the consensus of all students of eighteenth century political philosophy. Burke coveted the epithet of spokesman for the Whig party, and Locke had been "the evangelist of whig doctrine."⁽²⁾ The springs of Whig inspiration were indeed in Locke, but in Burke these waters took their color from the specific soil of his religious mind. Burke is therefore Locke, with a difference. Cobban states the difference succinctly: "Locke is the greatest of the founders of secular political science: Burke is essentially a religious thinker."⁽³⁾ And after a more complete study of Burke's thought he writes: "Locke's political philosophy is based on individual right; Burke begins at the other end with religious obligation."⁽⁴⁾

-
1. Alfred Cobban, Edmund Burke And The Revolt Against The Eighteenth Century, Page 38.
 2. Basil Williams, The Whig Supremacy, Page 3.
 3. Alfred Cobban, "Edmund Burke And The Origins Of The Theory Of Nationality", Cambridge Historical Journal. Volume II, Number 1, 1926. Page 37.
 4. Alfred Cobban, Edmund Burke And The Revolt Against The Eighteenth Century, Page 95-96.

Burke's indebtedness to the French school is most clearly seen when his thought is compared with that of Montesquieu. The historical method of the latter, as we shall see, becomes a political touchstone for Burke. Another motif in Montesquieu so prominent in Burke's thought is the great weight to be attached to the social and cultural milieu when considering any particular political proposition. So exalted a position did Montesquieu hold in Burke's mind that Osborn employs the phrase "Montesquieu, whom Burke revered as the greatest genius of the age."⁽¹⁾ Still it must be remembered that much of what Burke owed to Montesquieu had a source one step removed, for Montesquieu built in some measure upon Locke.

Burke's relation to Rousseau is more difficult to assay. Had the French Revolution been postponed beyond Burke's lifetime, we could have laid their thought side by side for objective examination. But the ascendancy of the revolutionary spirit in Burke's last years certainly drove him away from whatever value he had seen in the writer of Social Contract. The doctrine of the inalienable rights of man became treason to Burke after 1789. The kinship of their thought is best defended by Osborn.⁽²⁾ The differences are most

1. Annie M. Osborn, Rousseau And Burke, Page 7.

2. Ibid. (Especially Chapters VI and IX.)

(1)
caustically stated by Burke himself. In light of the central theme of this study it is only necessary to note here that Burke could always find a point of attack in Rousseau's years of dissolute living. Burke's indissoluble wedding of religion and virtue, plus his violent attitude toward the French Revolution, forbade his admitting in later years that any contribution could be possible from the author of the Confessions.⁽²⁾

With his admitted indebtedness to Montesquieu, and having at least exposed his mind to Rousseau by reading the Social Contract, we are not surprised to hear a utilitarian note in Burke. The nineteenth century will find few roots in him, yet Burke writes, "The practical consequences of any political tenet go a great way in deciding upon its value. Political problems do not primarily concern truth or falsehood. They relate to good or evil. What in the result is likely to produce evil, is

-
1. a. "We are not the converts of Rousseau".
Works, Volume IV, Page 221. Reflections.
b. "It is such a life that, with a wild defiance, he (Rousseau) flings in the face of his Creator, whom he acknowledges only to brave." Works, Volume IV, Page 374. Letter To A Member Of National Assembly.
c. "The assembly recommends to its youth a study of the bold experimenters in morality...Rousseau is their canon of holy writ...he is their standard of perfection." Ibid. Page 373.
 2. When Rousseau's chapter on Civil Religion in the Social Contract is compared with Burke's professed orthodoxy, how much more would the latter have turned from him on the basis of religious presuppositions!

politically false: that which is productive of good, politically
(1)
true."

If this reads like a page from Bentham's notebook, we need only to await the discussion of Burke's historical method to see how far his thought is from Bentham's. Halevy makes this succinct analysis: "From a Utilitarian philosophy Burke deduced an anti-democratic political theory...Even when political science is thought of as a science of utility, it can yet be understood in two very different ways -- as a demonstrative and deductive science (as it was understood by the Utilitarian reformers of 1832), or as an experimental science (as it was understood by the conservative Utilitarian, Burke.)"⁽²⁾

Vaughan urges the point that Burke stood with Hume and Bentham in attacking abstract ideas of Right by a constant reference to expediency. Conversely, he follows Montesquieu in the historical approach to current politics. The connection between these two was first worked out by Burke, Vaughan contends, and this constitutes his true originality and lasting significance for the history of political philosophy.⁽³⁾

Having in this manner considered Burke's place in the long development of political thought, we turn to the fundamental

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 462.
Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs.
 2. Elie Halevy, The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism, Page 158. (Halevy presents a full treatment of Burke's utilitarianism on pages 155-189 of this work.)
 3. C. E. Vaughan, Studies In The History Of Political Philosophy, Volume II. (In the paragraph above I closely follow Vaughan's argument as he develops it fully on pages 18-19.)

question for our study in this chapter. Did his religious faith play a leading role in the formation of his political philosophy? On this question there is no area of disagreement among students of the man and of the field.

"The vision of God, the faith in 'stupendous wisdom', the belief in a 'Divine tactic' in history were inwoven with his whole interpretation of experience and outlook on the world. And though, being neither theologian nor metaphysician, he never dreamed of proving these convictions (therein, no doubt, disclosing his limits as a thinker), this does not touch the fact that he carried them with him, with a passionate insistence, into his politics. Apart from them, his thought and his utterance are in large measure unintelligible."⁽¹⁾

MacCunn came to this conclusion after a careful and detailed study of the whole range of Burke's political life and thought. Sabine, whose canvass was much broader, would be expected to observe only that which was most prominent. Of Burke he says, "He, more than any other thinker in the eighteenth century, approached the political tradition with a sense of religious reverence."⁽²⁾ Laski, who can hardly be considered a devotee of eighteenth century conservatism, expresses the feelings of both admirer and critic: "Whether one agrees with his (Burke's) conclusions or not, he sees everything upon which he dwells

-
1. John MacCunn, The Political Philosophy of Burke, Page 90.
 2. George H. Sabine, A History Of Political Theory, Page 607.

(1)
'sub species aeternitatis'."

Though Burke thundered against "geographical morality" he might admit of geographical appositeness, so that we close this introductory section, concerning the Irishman in English politics, by quoting the contemporary Irish historian, McDowell:

"It is fairly obvious that eighteenth century conservatives, even when the lava of revolution was pouring over Europe, did not lack confidence in the righteousness and reasonableness of their cause. The political system, perhaps, had some small defects (which in practice were often productive of surprising advantages) but on the whole it was a piece of machinery perfectly adjusted to perform the functions of government for a society organized in accordance with the will of God and nature."⁽²⁾

With a sense of his place in the history of political thought, and with the evidence that he will view the political task from a religious frame of reference, we turn now to the conservative thought of the first of "eighteenth century conservatives."

-
1. H. J. Laski, Edmund Burke, An Address, Page 9. The address was delivered before The Historical Society, Trinity College, Dublin, the society which Burke founded as an undergraduate. Dr. R. B. McDowell who was present, characterized the address to the writer as "necessarily a tour de force". (Offered here as an apologia for boxing the compass of Burke's thought in a single chapter).
 2. R. B. McDowell, Irish Public Opinion, 1750-1800, Page 171.

B. The Primacy Of Conservatism.

The memory of the race appears to keep alive the names of those who have defended extreme positions in the political scale, which, in contemporary terminology reads from left to right. Perhaps the extremists are so well remembered because the mediocrity of the middle is always crowded. No one who has ever dipped into Burke's thought at any point, from his school day essays to his fulminations against the French radicals half a century later, has had any doubt as to the label which he wears. It is more than a label; it is a marching banner under which he wages his political warfare. He is the conservative among conservatives.

Moreover, his conservatism is evident not only from school desk to death bed, it informs every subject to which he turned his prolific mind. The rule of the aristocratic families he would perpetuate forever. The existing system of representation he would not touch. The relation of church and state as he found it represented the wisdom with which only fools would quarrel. All of these and many other aspects of his conservatism will be examined in some detail later in our study. Morley has blanketed Burke with the statement:

"He never swerved in his antipathy to free thought, whether in politics, in theology, or in ethics. To examine with a curious or unfavourable eye the bases of established opinions was to show a leaning to anarchy in one order,

to atheism in another, to unbridled libertinism in
the third."⁽¹⁾

Among the first sources of his conservatism is his historical mindedness. This was the motif which was to become full-blown in the romanticism of the generation which followed Burke. We find the theme when he writes at the age of thirty, seven years before he entered parliament: "I am persuaded, that, next to religion, nothing has so strongly actuated thinking man, nor indeed produced so many good and brave men, as their being inspired with a desire of keeping up to the examples of their fore-
fathers."⁽²⁾

Sixteen years later his faith in the backward glance has grown, so that he can say: "I put my foot in the tracks of our forefathers; where I can neither wander nor stumble."⁽³⁾ In one of the undated tracts on the popery laws he observes: "veneration of antiquity is congenial to the human mind."⁽⁴⁾ It remained for Morley to coin the expression that Burke always preferred that which has grown to that which is made.

-
1. John Morley, Burke, A Historical Study, Page 46.
It is significant to note that Laski, who is himself among Burke's keenest students, refers to Morley as: "the greatest of Burke's interpreters."
H. J. Laski, Letters Of Edmund Burke, in the dedication.
 2. Annual Register 1759, Page 128. (The essay in which the passage occurs is significantly entitled, "The Advantages Of Ancestry Demonstrated.")
 3. Works, Volume III, Page 276.
Speech On Conciliation With America.
 4. Works, Volume VI, Page 26.
Tracts On The Popery Laws.

This historical mindedness was what gave him his insight into the too sanguine hopes of revolutionists. It made him acutely aware of the continuity of the social organism. It enabled him to draw lessons from history with which to embarrass many of his opponents who had never sat at the feet of "the grand instructor, Time."⁽¹⁾ This historical sense gave him a solid basis for refuting the new French concept of contract, which Burke viewed as being too easily entered into, and too easily broken.

"Society is indeed a contract...it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all arts; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead,⁽²⁾ and those who are to be born."

Without this continuity with the past and the future Burke urges in another passage,⁽³⁾ "Men would become little better than the flies of a summer." As Vaughan points out, this is really what lay behind his rupture with Fox. "Fox believed that the principles of the French Revolution were nothing more than an

1. Works, Volume VI, Page 47.
Second Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe.

2. Works, Volume IV, Page 229-230.
Reflections.

3. Ibid. Page 228.

extension of those which had been accepted in England since the 'glorious revolution' of 1688. Burke discovered in them nothing less than the subversion of law, order, and religion -- of that reverence for historical traditions and institutions which he valued before all other things in a nation's life."⁽¹⁾

Granted that it is often distorted into a convenient refuge, still the treasury of political wisdom is indebted to anyone who soundly advances the principle of historical mindedness. Burke, up to a point, made this valuable contribution. But when the past is venerated as an object of political worship, and the fountain of all political truth, then the virtues of history have hardened into dictatorships of posterity. Burke fell victim to this winsome error.

"We have an inheritable crown; an inheritable peerage; and a House of Commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties, from a long line of ancestors. The policy appears to me to be the result of profound reflection; or rather the happy effect of following nature, which is wisdom without reflection, and above it. A spirit of innovation is generally the result of a selfish temper, and confined views. People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors."⁽²⁾

One step further and Burke has stepped over the boundary line between instruction from history and the worship of the past:

-
1. C. E. Vaughan, Burke's Reflections On The French Revolution, Page VII and VIII.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 177. Reflections.

"We know that we have made no discoveries; and we think that no discoveries are to be made, in morality; nor many in the great principles of government, nor in the ideas of liberty, which were understood long before we were born, altogether as well as they will be after the grave has heaped its mould upon our presumption, and the silent tomb shall have imposed its laws on our pert loquacity."⁽¹⁾

Another element in Burke's conservatism emerges when we raise the question, what did Burke see in the past on which he thus reverently gazed? Of course he saw the whole gradual growth of the English system of law from Magna Charta to 1688. This was both instructive and relevant to the eighteenth century political scene. But what is most important to grasp is the fact that he viewed the constitution, and the subsequent building erected upon it, as the final form of political wisdom and virtue. "The whole (constitution) has been done under the auspices, and is confirmed by the sanctions, of religion and piety."⁽²⁾ Thus it met the first test; it fitted into his religious frame of reference.

This must not be taken simply as his reaction to the new French doctrine. Seven years before the fall of the Bastille he had said in the House: "I look with filial reverence on the constitution of my country, and never will cut it in pieces, and put into the kettle of any magician, in order to boil it, with the puddle of their compounds, into youth and vigour. On the

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 221.
Reflections.

2. Ibid. Page 224.

contrary, I will drive away such pretenders; I will nurse its venerable age, and with lenient arts extend a parent's breath."⁽¹⁾

It remained, however, for the Revolutionary days to set Burke's seal of finality on the whole English system. He firmly believed that, under the constitution, working through the genius of the aristocratic families, the zenith of political achievement had been reached and the true wisdom was to maintain it. "We are resolved to keep an established church, an established monarchy, an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in the degree it exists, and in no greater."⁽²⁾

Burke saw clearly, and valiantly defended, the advantages of the constitutional settlement. But not even his eloquence could stay the flow of historical development, maintaining the continuity which he cherished, and working out the inevitable consequences of Locke's principles.

To his historical mindedness, and to his frozen reverence for the constitution, a number of elements of his political philosophy may be added to document the theory of his conservatism. Prescription and convention are words often on his lips:

"...All men have equal rights; but not to equal things... He that has but five shillings in the partnership, has as good a right to it, as he that has five hundred pounds has to his larger proportion. But he has not a right to an equal dividend in the product of the joint stock; and as

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 136.
Speech On Reform Of The Representation of Parliament,
1782.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 225.
Reflections.

to the share of power, authority, and direction which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society; for I have in my contemplation the civil social man, and no other. It is a thing to be settled by convention."⁽¹⁾

Those words are studied and deliberate. It is of the essence of Burke's thought. He gives his sanction to existing property distribution because it bears the marks of divine favor. Quite parenthetically he puts this remark into a private letter: "God is the distributor of his own blessings. I will not impiously attempt to usurp his throne, but will keep, according to the subordinate place and trust in which he has stationed me, the order of property which I find established in my country."⁽²⁾

This point of view Cobban traces back to his religious approach. "Prescription, then, is for Burke the most solid rock on which mundane rights can be based; it gives a title having for its sanction the eternal order of things; it is the master and not the creature of positive law, it is the decree of nature, it is the law of God."⁽³⁾ It was precisely this primacy of prescription that was so hateful to the revolutionists, both in France and in England.

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 198-199.
Reflections.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 576.
Burke To Captain Mercer, 26 February, 1790.
 3. Alfred Cobban, Edmund Burke And The Revolt Against The Eighteenth Century, Page 79.

But whether we begin with his sense of history, his view of the constitution, his stand on convention and prescription, or any other aspect of Burke's political thought, we arrive at last at a conservatism which he grounds in his concept of God. "The awful Author of our being is the Author of our place in the order of existence; and that having disposed and marshalled us by a divine tactic, not according to our will, but according to his, he has, in and by that disposition, virtually subjected us to act the part which belongs to the place assigned to us."⁽¹⁾

Here is no place for a fresh outbreak of God's purposes, working through personalities in the political sphere. It may even be questioned as to how much freedom of will remains for the individual. Burke agreed that virtue was possible only in an order of freedom, but how much freedom does he allow?

"We are all born in subjection, all born equally, high and low, governors and governed, in subjection to one great, immutable, pre-existent law, prior to all our devices, and prior to all our contrivances; paramount to all our ideas, and all our sensations; antecedent to our very existence, by which we are knit and connected in the eternal frame of the universe, out of which we cannot stir."⁽²⁾ Burke was saying this at the Hastings trial in specific reference to the law of justice, but it is only a refinement on the previous quotation on the social and political order.

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 460.
Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs.
 2. Works, Volume VII, Page 357-358.
Speech The Fourth Day Of Impeachment of Hastings.

Conservatism is a defensible position and Burke held firmly to those tenets which have nurtured constructively conservative minds in all ages. But to place on God the onus of defending eighteenth century injustices was scarcely an act of worship. We shall see in the closing pages of this chapter that Burke's humanitarian motifs were inspired by his religiously informed sense of duty. Nevertheless, it must be recorded that he sought the divine imprimatur for the eighteenth century. Where he would make improvements he did not look far afield for the blueprint. Acton said of him: "He looked for what ought to be in what is.⁽¹⁾ Is that not essentially Anglican?"

Those who hold to a theistic interpretation of life will always welcome a defence of that faith, but to equate Burke's England with the summum bonum was as preposterous as it was transient. That the endeavor constituted Burke's passion we cannot doubt. "Burke has invested the existing order with a halo of reverence."⁽²⁾

Some uncritical biographers have held that Burke's conservatism did not really take form until the rise of the radical theorists in the spectre of the new France. We have seen that it was the bent of his mind before he entered political life. Indeed, one of the most revealing perorations to come from his lips was uttered while he sat for Wendover in the early days of 1772. "I will not enter into the question how much truth is preferable to peace. Perhaps truth may be far better. But as we have

-
1. Acton MS 4967, Cambridge University Library. Quoted by Alfred Cobban, *Op. Cit.*, Page 85.
 2. Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, Page 231.

scarcely ever the same certainty in the one that we have in the other, I would, unless the truth were evident indeed, hold fast to peace, which has in her company charity, the highest of the virtues."⁽¹⁾ When Burke said that, he thought himself the champion of Christianity, which, for the moment, he was too confidently identifying with the established church. Nevertheless, that statement stands as an embarrassment to anyone who would take Burke for his guide in the search for truth, secular or religious. It is part of that excess which often marred his finest efforts.

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 87.
Speech On The Petition Of The Anglican Clergy, 1772.

C. Burke's Attitude Toward Change.

A political philosopher may spin his conservative theories in an ivory tower with impunity, but if he descends to the rough and tumble of the political arena he must have some elasticity in his political method. To borrow a phrase from the student of physics, "the area of expansion" will decide whether his conservatism is to be taken seriously. Burke's bastion does take cognisance of this principle, and we must briefly consider his attitude toward change. As he said in one of his finest passages: "A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation. Without such means it might even risk the loss of that part of the constitution which it wished the most religiously to preserve."⁽¹⁾

On closer examination this will be seen to be a splendid statement of what is really only a truism. Actually, of course, Burke was always swimming against the tide. Nevertheless, his declarations on the political maxim of gradualism are among the classics of political theory. "We must all obey the great law of change. It is the most powerful law of nature, and the means perhaps of its conservation. All we can do, and that human wisdom can do, is to provide that the change shall proceed by insensible degrees. This has all the benefits which may be in change, without any of the inconveniences of mutation. Every thing is provided for as it arrives."⁽²⁾

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 168. Reflections.

2. Works, Volume IV, Page 544.
Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe.

To grasp Burke's attitude toward change it is necessary to distinguish clearly between the narrow range in which he conceives change to be necessary, on the one hand, and on the other, the method by which the needful change is to be accomplished. That the scope is restricted is obvious. The roots run straight back to his historical frame of reference and his sense of Providence in English history.

"I would not exclude alteration either; but even when I changed, it would be to preserve. I should be led to my remedy by a great grievance. In what I did, I should follow the example of our ancestors. I would make the reparation as nearly as possible in the style of the building. A politic caution, a guarded circumspection, a moral rather than a complexional timidity, were among the ruling principles of our forefathers in their most decided conduct...He, that had made them thus fallible, rewarded them for having in their conduct attended to their nature. Let us imitate their caution, if we wish to deserve their fortune, or to retain their bequests."⁽¹⁾

The words "caution", "circumspection", and "timidity" were not words with which to build the brave new world across the Channel. With this narrow base for operations, we can understand Burke's self-righteous rage at the proposals to build a new heaven and a new earth in France. In a footnote to the *Reflections* he quotes a member of the National Assembly as follows:

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 354-355.
Reflections.

"A leading member of the assembly, M. Raubaud de St. Etienne, has expressed the principle of all their proceedings as clearly as possible--nothing can be more simple--"Tout les etablissemments en France couronnent le malheur du peuple; pour le rendre heureux il faut le renouveler; changer ses idees; changer ses loix; changer ses moeurs...changer les hommes; changer les choses; changer les mots...tout detruire: oui, tout detruire; (1)
puisque tout est a recreer."

To this passage Stephen pithily remarks that Burke would consider this method "as monstrous as a plan for reforming the Church by abolishing a belief in God." (2) Within a year he was to say on the floor of parliament: "to the Deity must be left the task of infinite perfection, while to us poor, weak, incapable mortals, there was no rule of conduct so safe as experience." (3) Writing this direct refutation, he penned words of deep significance for the twentieth century, "Believe me, sir, those who attempt to level, never equalize." (4) Here again we must not assume that Burke's thought took this mould only when the threat of total revolution rose in France. Twenty years before the banner of "liberty, equality, fraternity" proclaimed the promise of the political millenium he had written

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 288-289. Reflections.
 2. Leslie Stephen, English Thought In The Eighteenth Century, Volume II, Page 246.
 3. Speeches, Volume IV, Page 23.
Report Of Burke's Speech On The Quebec Bill, 1791.
 4. Works, Volume IV, Page 190.
Reflections.

to Shackleton: "Those who expect perfect reformatations, either deceive or are deceived miserably."⁽¹⁾

Burke's scope within which he would consider organic change being thus severely narrow, his method is therefore likewise restricted. He will allow of no tampering with the constitution, that is the holy of holies. It is therefore in the area of administration that we find him bringing forth proposals for change which were not entirely without merit. His Plan For Economical Reform was conceived in a mind that had some grasp of administrative detail. When it became law in 1782, even in its emasculated form, it helped to open the way for correcting in some degree the jobbery and corruption with which the whole administrative system was saturated. It was this Economical Reform Bill, together with the recognition of Irish parliamentary independence, which gave some sense of achievement to the second Rockingham ministry. Burke's concern for administrative reform on the one hand, and his utter refusal to consider constitutional change on the other, is reflected in this statement by Veitch:

"Burke felt a dread of organic change which grew with age into something very like terror, but bribery and corruption he attacked because they were destroying the constitution which he revered."⁽²⁾

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 116.
Burke to Richard Shackleton, 15 August, 1770.
 2. G.S.Veitch, The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform,
Page 69.

Undoubtedly Burke looked upon himself as the defender of a glorious political heritage which, under the constitution, had finally reached its zenith and needed nothing but to be perpetuated.⁽¹⁾

This will become even more apparent as we trace his thought in specific areas of the eighteenth century political scene. One feels that he would have rested his case on conservatism and change with these words:

"A disposition to preserve, and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman.

Every thing else is vulgar in the conception, perilous⁽²⁾ in the execution."

The historian of political thought, however, sees the whole stream of the century, and he sees that Burke was trying to arrest its flow. "Potentially an apostle of gradualism, Burke is in fact the defender of a static regime that yields⁽³⁾ to time only on trifles and at the last moment."

-
1. Graham has a sentence concerning Burke which would have wounded him sorely. "This stamp of mind, that dislikes all change, at the Reformation would have condemned it, and would have been on the side of Philip II; at the rise of Christianity with the persecuting Emperors."

William Graham, English Political Philosophy From Hobbes To Maine, Page 166.

2. Works, Volume IV, Page 280.
Reflections.

3. Thomas I. Cook, History of Political Philosophy, Page 669.

D. Circumstances, Prudence, And Expediency.

When we remember Burke's indebtedness to Montesquieu, and when we hold before our minds the foundations of his conservatism, it comes as no surprise that we see him giving such an ascendant place to the philosophy of circumstances. There stood the constitution and the solid achievements of English political acumen! The stock was pure, he was certain of that. It was needful therefore only to observe the fruit of the tree, and in the earliest stages, to pluck off any specimens that did not give promise of measuring up to the expected standard. In searching all the circumstances one would discover the sound fruit. As early as 1775 he was pleading for this method. "After all our struggle, whether we will or not, we must govern America according to that nature, and to those circumstances; and not according to our own imaginations."⁽¹⁾

Five years later the proposal to change the duration of parliament was the question which drew this statement: "To enable us to correct the constitution, the whole constitution must be viewed together; and it must be compared with the actual state of the people, and the circumstances of the time...Please God, I will walk with caution, whenever I am not able clearly to see my way before me."⁽²⁾

-
1. Works, Volume III, Page 246.
Speech On Conciliation With America.
 2. Works, Volume V, Page 610.
Letter On The Duration Of Parliament. (Written to the chairman of a meeting of the freeholders of Buckinghamshire to consider the proposal).

This insistence on the great consideration to be given to circumstances became a growing passion. Of course this is perfectly understandable in the latter years when the revolutionists were endeavoring to build their political utopia de nouveau. But long before that time Burke had insisted that all proposals concerning representation, the franchise, the rights of juries, the attitude toward colonial peoples, should each be viewed in the light of the total social and political picture at the moment the particular proposition was brought forward. It was against this long background that he wrote in 1791: "A constant vigilance and attention to the train of things as they successively emerge, and to act on what they direct, are the only sure courses."⁽¹⁾

The greatly mooted question of Burke's consistency, or lack of it, can best be approached through a study of this doctrine of circumstances. To mention but one instance here, we shall see that in 1792 he steadfastly opposed the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, whereas twenty years earlier he had championed relief for the Dissenters. What was his explanation? The circumstances had changed to such an extent that repeal would be a threat to the state. It is with a view to this background of circumstances that Morley makes his famous defence of Burke's consistency: "He changed his front, but he never changed his ground."⁽²⁾

There is real fervor in Burke's passionate defence of the political creed of circumstances. He leaves no room for doubt,

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 574.
Thoughts On French Affairs.

2. John Morley, Edmund Burke, Page 169. (The English Men Of Letters series).

as indeed he wanted no one to doubt his foundations. Every critical scholar has fastened on this realistic statement of the doctrine:

"I must see with my own eyes, I must, in a manner, touch with my own hands, not only the fixed, but the momentary circumstances, before I could venture to suggest any political project whatsoever. I must know the power and disposition to accept, to execute, to preserve. I must see all the aids, and all the obstacles. I must see the means for correcting the plan, where correctives would be wanted. I must see the things; I must see the men. Without a concurrence and adaptation of these to the design, the very best speculative projects might become not only useless but mischievous."⁽¹⁾

This lucid statement from the philosopher-politician must always be held in mind whenever the value of circumstances as a political doctrine is at issue.⁽²⁾ It is only an enlargement on this theme when Burke gives vent to his flare for the excessive and says: "Circumstances are infinite, are infinitely combined; are variable and transient; he who does not take them into consideration, is not erroneous, but stark mad--dat operam ut cum ratione insaniat--he is metaphysically mad."⁽³⁾

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 384.
Letter To A Member Of The National Assembly.
 2. Could there be a more inept line than this from Hazlitt? "Burke's mind was satisfied with speculation."
Hazlitt's Essay On "The Character of Burke," quoted by A.M.D. Hughes, Selections From Burke, Page 4.
 3. Works, Volume VI, Page 101.
Speech On The Petition Of The Unitarians, 1792.

We noted above, if any disclaimer were needed, Laski was no disciple of Burke. However, he has given an appraisal of the latter's doctrine of circumstances which makes Burke's thought at this critical point relevant for whatever political history may be left to man. "There is no wise man in politics, with an important decision to make, who would not do well to refresh his mind by discussion with Burke's mind, before he issues the final word which, by settling the question, gives rise to new and probably more complex problems just because he thinks it is his final word."⁽¹⁾

The whole subject of prudence and expediency, both necessary correlates to a high doctrine of circumstances, is exceedingly complex. Circumstances constitute the great variable. Prudence and expediency therefore, presupposing moral principle, constitute the everlasting constants in the political equation. This constancy Burke grasped clearly: "Prudence is not only the first in rank of the virtues political and moral, but she is the director, the regulator, the standard of them all."⁽²⁾ And again: "So truly has prudence (constituted as the god of this lower world) the entire dominion over every exercise of power committed into its hands; and yet I have lived to see prudence and conformity to circumstances wholly set at nought."⁽³⁾

-
1. H. J. Laski, Edmund Burke, An Address, Page 1.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 407.
Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs.
 3. Works, Volume III, Page 320.
Letter To The Sheriffs Of Bristol.

Cobban says of Burke: "The lesson of expediency is to be learnt from him in full measure."⁽¹⁾ It scarcely needs pointing out that the principle of expediency had none of the modern connotation of opportunism. It simply meant the search for the general good, and this implied principles loyally adhered to, else the supposed "good" was not worth the price. We must hear Burke himself on this. "What is the standard of expedience? Expedience is that which is good for the community, and good for every individual in it. Now this expedience is the desideratum..."⁽²⁾

Vaughan rightly insists that expediency is "useful as a servant. It makes the worst of all masters."⁽³⁾ He argues thusly to show that Burke accepted all manner of evil in eighteenth century England if only the greater evil of the French Revolution could be avoided. That prudence and expediency always demand the prior supposition of a high concept of duty is patent. That Burke met this requirement is granted by even his critics, as we shall see later in this chapter.

It is of more than passing interest to note that the doctrine of circumstances, necessitating as it does the employment of prudence and expediency, becomes in Burke the wall of defence against "metaphysical theorists." He had spent a

-
1. Alfred Cobban, Op. Cit., Page 47.
 2. Works, Volume VI, Page 132.
Speech On Reform Of Representation In The House of Commons, 1782.
 3. C. E. Vaughan, Studies In The History of Political Philosophy, Volume II, Page 24.

solid lifetime in developing these themes before he saw the flames over France. "From the beginning, Burke recognizes that, in method and principle, the struggle is between expediency and judicial right."⁽¹⁾ That basic antagonism constitutes our next problem.

1. C. F. Vaughan, Op. Cit., Page 2.

E. The Place of Abstract Theories And Rights.

To telescope our discussion of this facet of Burke's thought, we begin with Robertson's characterization of him as "the champion of the historical method, so fatal to any abstract theory of natural rights."⁽¹⁾ Burke had made his position clear in the early stages of the American problem. Speaking on the "right" of England to tax the colonies, he urges that America be left to tax herself, and not to lose the trade of the empire just to establish an abstract right. "I am not here going into the distinction of rights, not attempting to mark their boundaries. I do not enter into these metaphysical distinctions; I hate the very sound of them."⁽²⁾

This hatred of "metaphysical rights" was to characterize his thought from these early days in parliament until the final stroke of his pen. In 1782, which may be taken as the year of midpassage in his career, Burke was the spokesman of the party in power. In that year he said: "This is the true touchstone of all theories which regard man and the affairs of men--does it suit his nature in general--does it suit his nature as modified by his habits?"⁽³⁾

-
1. C. G. Robertson, England Under The Hanoverians, Page 350.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 218.
Speech On American Taxation.
 3. Works, Volume VI, Page 132.
Speech On Reform Of Representation Of Parliament.

Those who were to proclaim liberty on the basis of abstract rights in 1789 could have found their opponent in the candidate for Bristol in 1774, saying in a pre-election speech in that year: "The distinguishing part of our constitution is its liberty...But liberty, the only liberty I mean, is a liberty connected with order; that not only exists along with order and virtue, but which cannot exist at all without them."⁽¹⁾ Small wonder then that when he could discern neither order nor virtue in the revolutionists more than fifteen years later he could give no credence to their views on liberty. Another truism buttresses his position: "Liberty, too, must be limited in order to be possessed."⁽²⁾

Turning to Vaughan's analysis again, we find a framework for our study of theories and rights in Burke. "To him, the historical method means the appeal to experience, the appeal to experience means the acceptance of expediency; and the acceptance of expediency, in its turn, means the absolute rejection of all considerations of right."⁽³⁾

Burke believed the wisdom of God was to be seen in human nature as it had come forth from the hand of its Creator.

-
1. Works, Volume III, Page 230.
Speech On Arrival At Bristol, 1774.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 322.
Letter To The Sheriffs Of Bristol, 1777.
 3. C. E. Vaughan, Studies In The History of Political Philosophy, Volume II, Page 15-16. (Of course he cautions that we distinguish between legal right, constitutional right, and abstract right. However, a moral right in Burke's thought will usually be found to be expedient.)

Political wisdom therefore would study that nature, in its social circumstance, and thus arrive at a political strategy.

"I have in my contemplation the civil social man, and no other."⁽¹⁾ His wrath was poured out on those who spun rigid theories and then tried to fit human nature to them:

"The pretended rights of these theorists are all extremes; and in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically false...Political reason is a computing principle; adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing, morally, and not metaphysically or mathematically, true moral denominations."⁽²⁾

Here is certainly one of the clearest reasons for his turning from Rousseau, aside from the moral revulsion which the latter produced in Burke. He saw in Rousseau the spokesman of that whole group of "philosophes" who professed to be drawing political wisdom from the wells of nature. When these "philosophes" became an "armed doctrine" Burke felt his instinctive distrust had been vindicated. They had made only a surface examination; they had not gone to the rock from whence human nature had been digged: "It is thus that Burke rescues 'Nature' from its professed disciples--the Nature which he feels to be real, because deeply rooted, far below the probings of superficial analysis, in history, in the

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 199.
Reflections.

2. Ibid. Page 201.

unconscious mind of man, and ultimately, in the purposes of
(1)
God."

When Burke had annihilated abstract theory, at least to his own satisfaction if to no one else's, and when he had put the frame of reference for rights on the broad canvass of history, and the spiritual nature of man, coloring the whole with an aura of theistic motif, he had prepared the way for the romanticists. Wordsworth, looking upon the works of our Irishman could write:

"...the majesty proclaims
Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;
Declares the vital power of social ties
Endeared by Custom; and with high disdain,
Exploding upstart Theory, insists (2)
Upon the allegiance to which men are born--".

It remains for MacCunn to conclude this discussion of theories with an insight which Burke's poor sense of humor probably would not have appreciated. He points out that Burke "avers, in short (with Aristotle), that a science of politics is impossible. Clearly, therefore, this sworn foe of theory (3) has reached a theory of first-rate theoretical significance."

-
1. Basil Willey, Op. Cit., Page 247.
 2. Wordsworth, The Prelude.
 3. John MacCunn, Op. Cit., Page 8.

F. The Spiritual Nature Of The State And
The Theistic Ground Of All Law.

Beginning with this section we advance from the framework of Burke's thought, with its religious presuppositions, to a consideration of several specific political problems. The nature of civil society, being one of the primary problems for political philosophy in every age, we therefore begin with an endeavor to grasp Burke's concept of the state. The dilettante who would differentiate states by a study of the map meets this sharp rebuff: "Nation is a moral essence, not a geographical arrangement, or a denomination of the nomenclator."⁽¹⁾

The eighteenth century on the whole is not remembered for its emphasis on an orthodox conception of spiritual foundations. The Aufklarung was finding its sources not in the light of heaven but in the light of reason. The apostles of consent in that era, as well as the political thinker of our own day, will find an affront in Burke's oft-quoted line: "He who gave our nature to be perfected by our virtue, willed also the necessary means of its perfection--He willed therefore the state--He willed its connexion with the source and original archetype of all perfection."⁽²⁾ The age of reason quarreled with the foundation. God, if He existed at all, was emeritus. Our age, threatened with leviathan, is not likely to accept Burke's

1. Works, Volume V, Page 310.
First Letter On A Regicide Peace.

2. Works, Volume IV, Page 231.
Reflections.

thesis that the state is the means of perfecting human nature. Nevertheless there it stands, and it is one of his most cherished beliefs. "As man's nature and the State are alike the manifestations of the Divine will, they must be presumed to be harmoniously adapted each to the other. Nor is there any principle in the whole of his writing with which Burke is more in earnest than this."⁽¹⁾

However, when we have passed judgment on this possibility of perfection, we find in Burke a solid defence for the proposition that civil society must have religious presuppositions. "We know, and, what is better, we feel inwardly, that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good, and of all comfort."⁽²⁾ If we ask how the state comes into being, Burke answers in words which fairly bristle with the whole frame of thought we have previously examined:

"A nation is not an idea only of local extent and individual momentary aggregation, but it is an idea of continuity which extends in time as well as in numbers and in space. And this is a choice not of one day, or one set of people, not a tumultuary and giddy choice; it is a deliberate election of ages and of generations; it is a constitution made by what is ten thousand times better than choice, it is made by the peculiar circumstances, occasions, tempers, dispositions, and moral, civil, and social habitudes of

1. John MacCunn, Op. Cit., Page 66.

2. Works, Volume IV, Page 224.
Reflections.

the people, which disclose themselves only in a long space of time. It is a vestment which accommodates itself to the body."⁽¹⁾

Providence had been working through the successive generations to effect this acme of civil society which was Burke's England. "In religion, therefore, he found the sanction for the state. It satisfied him absolutely and completely."⁽²⁾ But in addition to having its roots in the eternal, the state was in constant dependence upon the divine favor. "Should He but withdraw his finger we should become as little among the nations as ever we were great."⁽³⁾

This sanction for the state in the divine nature, and this continuance of it by the divine mercy, is the background with which he examines all proposals for the formation of new states and new constitutions. He firmly believed the American colonists had a lively sense of the eternal, and he as firmly believed the New France was beginning to build without the necessary foundation. Referring to the earliest leaders of the Revolution he wrote: "They began its destruction (the government's) by subverting, under pretexts of rights of man, the foundations of civil society itself. They trampled upon the religion of their country, and upon all religion."⁽⁴⁾ And again:

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 130. Speech On Reform Of Representation In Commons. (Note that this peroration was spoken as early as 1782.)
 2. Annie M. Osborn, Rousseau And Burke, Page 147.
 3. Speeches, Volume III, Page 74. Report of Burke's Speech On Inquiry Into The Conduct of Hastings.
 4. Works, Volume II, Page 65.
Letter From Burke to William Waddell, 31 January, 1792.

"I call it atheism by establishment, when any state, as such, shall not acknowledge the existence of God as a moral governor of the world."⁽¹⁾ When he had said that he had passed sentence; what followed would be only the documentation of the decree.

He had taken account of American affairs in this light and found the prospects bright: "Religion, always a principle of energy, in this new people is in no way worn out or impaired; and their mode of professing it is also one main cause of their free spirit."⁽²⁾ He had looked to atheistic France and saw nothing but darkness. When he saw Ireland standing in peril as the Protestant junto was devising means of compromising certain Catholic clergy, he wrote to his son Richard: "You observe very rightly, that this would be the destruction of all religion whatsoever; and when that is destroyed, nothing can be saved, or is worth saving."⁽³⁾

The state then was conceived in the will of God. It fitted man's nature for God had ordained both man and state. It was to be the means of his perfection. When any state turns from God the divine favor is withdrawn. The religious man therefore can view no state with respect which does not confess its existence to be of God. For Burke, "It is not worth asking whether

-
1. Works, Volume V, Page 300.
First Letter On A Regicide Peace.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 254.
Speech On Conciliation With America.
 3. Works, Volume II, Page 142.
Burke To His Son Richard, September 1792.

his patriotism would have survived the destruction of his theism, because in his mind the two things are one and indivisible."⁽¹⁾

Since the state is willed by God and the law is the will of the state, it therefore follows as a necessary correlate that there is a theistic ground of all law which is promulgated by the state acting consciously as God's agent. As early as 1771, when speaking of the power of juries in prosecutions for libel, he employed the phrase: "the great Author of all law."⁽²⁾

Here is Burke's great bulwark against a government by men rather than by law. He feels the necessity for having a prior reference if one is to criticize undue power in the hands of any man. "It is a contradiction in terms; it is blasphemy in religion; it is wickedness in politics, to say that any man can have arbitrary power...We may bite our chains if we will, but we shall be made to know ourselves, and be taught that man is born to be governed by law; and he that will substitute Will in the place of it is an enemy to God."⁽³⁾ This frame of reference has been the defence of many against the powers of despotism.

There are areas of political conflict in the twentieth century which could rise to the level of another aspect of his thought concerning the nature of law. He insists that the laws of men must be authenticated by comparison with the given laws of God. "If, then, all dominion of man over man is the effect of the Divine disposition, it is bound by the eternal laws of

1. John MacCunn, Op. Cit., Page 141.

2. Speeches, Volume I, Page 88.

3. Works, Volume VII, Page 359.

Speech Fourth Day of Impeachment of Hastings.

Him that gave it, with which no human authority can dispense."⁽¹⁾

The whole point is the Biblical emphasis that God governs the world through laws and men and institutions of His own devising. "Burke never could feel that any government or any society was a matter of human concern alone; it was a part of the divine moral order wherewith God governs the world."⁽²⁾

That worship is not alone the affair of the temple but also of things parliamentary is a chord which needs to be struck in every generation. Burke was always urging men to broaden their horizons when viewing the law, and he was at his best when he could do this on the basis of his faith. "My Lords, it is not only in the house of prayer that we offer to the First Cause the acceptable homage of our rational nature--My Lords, in this House, at this bar, in this place, in every place, where his commands are obeyed, his worship is performed."⁽³⁾

We shall see in a subsequent section of this chapter the value of Burke's insistence upon the doctrine of trusteeship which has its source in this theistic frame of reference. Among the finest statements of this faith that the law itself is grounded in God is this extract from one of his last public addresses:

"The law is the security of the people of England, it is the security of the people of India, it is the security

-
1. Works, Volume VII, Page 358.
Speech Fourth Day of Impeachment of Hastings.
 2. George H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory,
Page 616.
 3. Works, Volume VII, Page 473.
Speech On Sixth Charge Against Hastings.

of every person that is governed, and of every person that governs. There is but one law for all, namely, that law which governs all law, the law of our Creator, the law of humanity, justice, equity,--the law of nature and of nations."⁽¹⁾

1. Works, Volume VIII, Page 179.
Speech In Reply, First Day, 1794.

G. The Relation Of Church And State.

This problem runs through the whole discussion of Burke's attitude toward the churches which constitutes the closing chapters of this study. However, it is necessary to introduce the subject here since it is essential to his political thought and since it must be seen as essential in order to understand his attitude toward the particular churches. Suffice it to say that he accepted without question the working relation of church and state as it came down with that constitutional settlement and total political heritage of which he was the champion. Nevertheless, there is a vital distinction to be made between the thought of Burke and that well-known position stated by Warburton which appeared in England while Burke was still an Irish schoolboy. We shall seek for that distinction when we have heard Burke on the vital importance of the established church in the state:

"They (the people of England) do not consider their church establishment as convenient, but as essential to their state; not as a thing heterogeneous and separable; something added for accomodation; what they may either keep or lay aside, according to their temporary ideas of convenience. They consider it as the foundation of their whole constitution, with which, and with every part of which, it holds an indissoluble union. Church and state are ideas inseparable in their minds, and scarcely is the one ever mentioned without mentioning the other."⁽¹⁾

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 232.
Reflections.

One classical definition of the relation between church and state had been given by Warburton and it is necessary to hear him in order to see the perfect foil for Burke's own thought:

"Having found that each society is sovereign and independent of the other, it as necessarily follows that such Union can be produced only by free convention and mutual compact ...But nothing can give birth to a free convention but a sense of mutual wants, that may be supplied; or a view of mutual benefits that may be gained by it. Such then is the nature of that union which produces a Church By Law Established, and which is indeed no other than a politic league and alliance for mutual support and defence."⁽¹⁾

This relationship of "sovereign and independent" societies is the key to Warburton's concept of the alliance. Sykes reviews Warburton's position and summarizes it as follows: "The formation of any alliance between church and state partook of the nature of a compact between two sovereign and independent powers, each ordained for its own proper function, and by consequence that such an alliance must be based upon a sense of the mutual support which each society was able to afford the other."⁽²⁾ These very words "alliance" and "compact" are not allowed by Burke. They too readily suggest a distinction which he was never prepared to admit.

-
1. William Warburton, The Alliance Between Church And State, Book II, Section I, Page 54.
 2. Norman Sykes, Church And State In England In The Eighteenth Century, Page 320.

"An alliance between church and state in a Christian commonwealth is, in my opinion, an idle and a fanciful speculation. An alliance is between two things, that are in their nature distinct and independent, such as between two sovereign states. But in a Christian commonwealth, the church and the state are one and the same thing, being different integral parts of the same whole."⁽¹⁾ Nothing could be stated more plainly, and on his position Lecky is forthright: "The doctrine of Warburton, that church and state are two distinct bodies, which have entered into an alliance for their mutual advantage, he (Burke)⁽²⁾ wholly rejected."

With this concept of the relation of church and state in mind it is easy to understand his view toward the part the civil magistrate might play with respect to religious bodies. Indeed the state was simply nurturing itself when it was nurturing religion: "Religion is so far, in my opinion, from being out of the province or duty of a Christian magistrate, that it is, and it ought to be, not only his care, but the principal thing in his care...The magistrate who is a man, and charged with the concerns of men, and to whom very specially nothing human is remote and indifferent, has a right and a duty to watch over it with an unceasing vigilance, to protect, to promote, to forward it by every rational, just, and prudent means."⁽³⁾

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 102.
Speech On The Petition Of The Unitarians, 1792.
 2. W. E. H. Lecky, History Of England In The Eighteenth Century, Volume V, Page 178.
 3. Works, Volume VI, Page 102.
Speech On The Petition Of The Unitarians, 1792.

This point of the competency of civil magistrates was urged on the floor of the house three years after the fall of the Bastille, when Burke was fearing the petitioners to be infected with Jacobinism. But twenty years earlier he had said precisely the same thing: "If there is any one thing within the competency of a magistrate with regard to religion, it is this, that he has a right to direct the exterior ceremonies of religion; that whilst interior religion is within the jurisdiction of God alone, the external part, bodily actions, is within the province of the chief governor."⁽¹⁾

Burke's too confident identification of church and state kept him from attaching any real prophetic function to the church, as we shall see. Not only so but it blinded him to a just appraisal of conditions where church and state were partners in oppression. It kept him from recognizing that where toleration is limited it does not exist. But Burke had taken his stand, and even in a private letter to his son Richard he could write: "If ever the church and the constitution of England should fall in these islands (and they will fall together), it is not Presbyterian discipline, nor Popish hierarchy, that will rise upon their ruins...It is the new fanatical religion...which rejects all establishments, all discipline, all ecclesiastical, and in truth all civil order, which will triumph."⁽²⁾

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 96.
Speech On Bill For Relief Of Dissenters, 1773.
 2. Works, Volume VI, Page 59.
Burke To His Son Richard. (Undated, probably 1792).

H. The Natural Aristocracy.

As we saw in the first chapter of our study, Burke entered political life through the benefaction of Lord Rockingham. Without such a system as enabled our "Irish adventurer", having neither wealth or influence, to obtain a seat in parliament, the life story of Burke might have been vastly different. London's Grub Street had claimed many victims who had given equally as bright promise of literary success. He was ever grateful to Rockingham, and the lasting debt of gratitude was more than repaid by Burke's unparalleled eulogy on the whole oligarchical system. Of political life in the eighteenth century, Turberville writes:

"The political history of England, so far as domestic affairs go, is very largely that of the quarrels and alliances of various aristocratic factions or family connexions. The names Whig and Tory are quite misleading in explanation of the party conflicts of the period. The key to them is in the relationships of groups, Pelhams, Bedfords, Grenvilles, Rockinghams, and the rest."⁽¹⁾

That this "relationship of groups", and very small groups they were, should continue to hold the controlling power in the country, Burke never for a moment doubted. Had not the "divine tactic" brought two things to pass? First, there was the splendid constitutional structure of England, and nowhere could such solid achievement be matched. Secondly, the power of the

1. A. S. Turberville, The House of Lords In The Eighteenth Century, Page 483.

system was in the hands of these groups and families. Had not a "natural" and therefore a Divine selection intended it so? To quarrel with the system would have been an act of impiety.

"A true natural aristocracy is not a separate interest in the state, or separable from it...To be bred in a place of estimation; to see nothing low and sordid from one's infancy...to stand upon such elevated ground as to be enabled to take a large view of the wide-spread and infinitely diversified combinations of men and affairs in a large society; to have leisure to read, to reflect, to converse...to be led to a guarded and regulated conduct, from a sense that you are considered as an instructor of your fellow-citizens in their highest concerns, and that you act as a reconciler between God and man...these are the circumstances of men, that form what I should call a natural aristocracy, without which there is no nation."⁽¹⁾

That passage stands as the most familiar in the bead roll of Burke's encomium of the aristocracy. Small wonder then that Paine's advocacy of stripping all the hereditary elements in the constitution should unleash Burke's fury. But he had been sure of his ground from his earliest days in the political world. Indeed, as early as 1772, we find Burke writing to the Duke of Richmond a panegyric on that aristocracy which had enabled him to gain his place in the political world. To Richmond he wrote:

"The immediate power of a Duke of Richmond, or a Marquis of Rockingham, is not so much of moment; but if their

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 466.
Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs.

conduct and example hand down their principles to their successors, then their houses become the public repositories and offices of record for the constitution; not like the Tower, or Rolls-chapel, where it is searched for and sometimes in vain, in rotten parchments under dripping and perishing walls, but in full vigour, and acting with vital energy and power, in the character of the leading men and natural interests of the country."⁽¹⁾

In that passage Burke all but equates the aristocracy with the constitution, which he revered. In fact, we might even say that this is the locus classicus of the Whig theory of political trusteeship. Green says of Burke: "His aim was to keep England as the Revolution left it, and under the rule of the great nobles who were faithful to the Revolution."⁽²⁾ This is indeed Burke's view. These great patrician families were the benevolent overlords whose divinely appointed task it was to maintain "the final establishment of English institutions."⁽³⁾

It is not too much to say that Burke rests his hopes for civilization on the twin pillars of religion and the aristocracy. At least these are the foundations which he saw when he looked back to the history of England, and he was ever looking back. "Nothing is more certain, than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things which are connected with manners, and with civilization, have, in this European world of ours, depended for

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 190.
Burke To Duke Of Richmond, 17 November, 1772.
 2. John Richard Green, History Of The English People, Volume VII, Page 335.
 3. Ibid. Page 335.

ages upon two principles; and were indeed the result of both combined; I mean the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion."⁽¹⁾ The age of chivalry lives again in that tortuous sentence. In a mastery of under-statement Barker says that Burke was "prone to magnify the pearls of aristocratic wisdom."⁽²⁾

It is precisely at this point that Burke's concept of the "people" can best be understood. To the uninitiated, reading him for the first time, Burke could pass for a twentieth century candidate, so warm are his eulogies of the people. But he is always speaking of "virtual representation", never of a count of heads. His opposition to an extension of the franchise was inveterate. How then can he use the phrase "the people?" He makes this clear:

"The state of civil society, which necessarily generates this aristocracy, is a state of nature; and much more truly so than a savage and incoherent mode of life...When great multitudes act together, under that discipline of nature, I recognize the PEOPLE...But when you disturb this harmony; when you break up this beautiful order, this array of truth and nature; as well as of habit and prejudice; when you separate the common sort of men from their proper chieftains so as to form them into an adverse army, I no longer know that venerable object called the people in such a disbanded race of deserters and vagabonds."⁽³⁾

The truth is that Burke was deeply convinced of the political incapacity of the multitude. He was equally certain that, class

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 215. Reflections.
 2. Ernest Barker, Burke And Bristol, Page 117.
 3. Works, Volume IV, Page 467. Appeal From The New To The Old Whigs. (The capitalization of "people" is Burke's).

distinctions being what they were, the fount of authority and wisdom was at the top. Those who lived below those heights must take their political opinions from above, just as the dwellers in the valley receive their precious water from sources on the mountain. Trevelyan, at the same time that he refers to Burke as "the conscience of the party" of Rockingham Whigs, lays bare the static assumptions which he held: "He wished to go back to 1689, not forward to any new thing. He still saw nothing in the vista of time to come save the members of a virtuous peerage combining to control the Crown, and indirectly to represent a grateful populace."⁽¹⁾

The divine right of kings had passed forever from the stage of English political life. Burke was determined to establish something akin to the divine right of the patrician families. Lord Rockingham was not only a convenient friend who opened the door to politics; he and his kind actually constituted the hallowed walls and the sacred dome of the temple of political wisdom. Human nature had come from the hands of its Creator in such a way that this ascendancy of the natural aristocracy, far from being an accident of history, was clearly the working out of a foreordained plan in the mind of God.

1. G. M. Trevelyan, British History In The Nineteenth Century, Page 38.

I. Political Obligation Based On Responsibility
To God.

In the fall of the year 1744, a fifteen year old schoolboy in Dublin wrote the following statement of faith to a Quaker lad in the Irish countryside: "It is the business of every one to search whether their way be good; and if any man who knows this to be his duty--as there is no Christian but does--if (I say) he willingly neglects this and be found in a wrong way, he will not be held guiltless before God."⁽¹⁾ Grown to man's estate, the adolescent writer might have looked back on such a confession with embarrassment, or at least with a smile at youth's venture in heroics. Burke, however, would never have recanted, but would have accepted this youthful letter as his platform at every turn of his political life.

When American affairs were rapidly approaching a crisis, those members of Parliament who were not asleep, or at the coffee houses, heard a note infrequently sounded within those walls: "I am beyond measure surprised that you seem to feel no sort of terror at the awfulness of the situation in which you are placed by Providence, or into which you thought proper to intrude yourselves. A whole people culprit! Nations under accusation! A tribunal erected for commonwealths! This is no vulgar idea, and no trivial undertaking; it makes me shudder...Next to that tremendous day in which it is revealed that the saints of God shall judge the world, I know nothing that fills my mind with greater

1. A.P.I.Samuels, The Early Life, Correspondence, And Writings of Edmund Burke, Page 57. Burke To Richard Shackleton, 15 October, 1744.

apprehension; and yet I see the matter trifled with, as if it were the beaten routine, an ordinary quarter-session, or a paltry course of common gaol-delivery."⁽¹⁾

Most students of Burke consider his speech on conciliation with America to be among his finest utterances. There is a peroration in that address which admirably combines Burke's motifs of Providence, circumstances, prudence, and sense of political obligation: "A great empire and little minds go ill together. If we are conscious of our situation, and glow with zeal to fill our places as becomes our station and ourselves, we ought to auspicate all our public proceedings on America, with the old warning of the Church, Sursum Corda! We ought to elevate our minds to the greatness of that trust to which the order of Providence has called us."⁽²⁾

It is well to hold these early declarations clearly in mind, for some critics of Burke have indicated that his plea for political obligation based on a sense of the divine became ascendant only when those who denied the existence of the divine came forward on the political stage. But even more important is the acid test as to whether the orator acts on the principles which he enunciates in these apparently florid flights. When votes are at stake, is this professed obligation to the Creator binding over against the opinions of constituents? Burke answered that question in his relation to Bristol, and we must examine that relationship as a case history. The politician's handbook is filled

-
1. Works, Volume II, Page 427-428. Speech on Bill To Restrain Trade And Commerce Of Massachusetts, 1775.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 291. Speech On Conciliation With America.

with anecdotes and quotations from this record.

Burke was invited to stand for Bristol in the election of 1774. No doubt he coveted the honor, for the growing trade of the second city in the land would give prestige to his cherished commercial policies. Soon after the voting began, it was obvious that he would have the seat. It was his speech at the conclusion of the poll that stands for all time against the concept of a member as being an instructed advocate.

"Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of parliament."⁽¹⁾

No doubt this shook the confidence of some who had so recently cast their ballots for the Irishman whom they felt was by now firmly rooted in English soil. Bristol had been in the habit of instructing her members and had no intention of discontinuing the practice. Perhaps Burke anticipated to some degree what lay ahead and wanted to have a rejoinder at hand for the day of reckoning. But of his sincerity, and of his intentions to abide by his declarations, there is no doubt. He went on to lift the discussion of representation into what must have been a rarified atmosphere

1. Works, Volume III, Page 236.
Speech At The Conclusion Of The Poll At Bristol, 1774.

for the traders who had come up from their offices on the water front to hear the man they were confident would act as their agent in London.

"Certainly, gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinion high respect; their business unremitted attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfactions, to theirs; and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own. But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you; to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure; no, nor from the law and the constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion."⁽¹⁾

With that declaration of independence, Burke went off to sit for the great city as though he were still the incumbent from Wendover where he had been left with a free hand. But events rapidly transpired to open a gap between the member and Bristol. Another Declaration of Independence was signed on the other side of the Atlantic, with Burke's warm sympathies, and Bristol,

1. Works, Volume III, Page 236.
Speech At Conclusion Of The Poll At Bristol, 1774.

having "rallied round the flag", and incidentally profiting greatly by the war, thought her representative somewhat lacking in patriotic fervor. Then Burke offended his predominantly Protestant constituency by voting for the repeal of certain measures against the Roman Catholics in the session of 1778.⁽¹⁾ In this he was simply being consistent with a life-long policy. But perhaps the deepest thrust was not sympathy with America, for so long as the commercial interests reaped dividends from the war they could well afford to overlook the benighted friendship of their member. Nor was the religious question dominant, though it was strong. They might even have forgiven Burke's failure to visit Bristol more than twice in six years. But when he had openly advocated lessening the restrictions on Irish trade, he had put his hand on the ark of the covenant.⁽²⁾ Chided by the merchant interests of his city he replied with ringing conviction and pure Irish nerve:

"The fault I find in the scheme (on Irish trade) is--that it falls extremely short of that liberality in the commercial system, which, I trust, will one day be adopted...he (Burke) is in parliament to support his opinion of the public good, and does not form his opinion in order to get into parliament, or to continue in it."⁽³⁾

-
1. Weare states, "The minds of a considerable number (in Bristol) were inflamed with prejudices against the Roman Catholics, and against those who had supported the measures for their relief." G.E.Weare, Edmund Burke's Connection With Bristol, Page 149.
 2. Green is in open error at this point. In his discussion of Burke he writes, "he struggled bitterly against all proposals to give freedom to Irish trade." John R.Green, History Of The English People, Volume VII, Page 335-336.
 3. Works, Volume III, Page 333 and 338.
Burke To The Society of Merchants At Bristol, 1778.

The result of abiding by his political convictions, and of acting in accordance with his intentions as declared in 1774, could have been foretold without undue prescience before election day of 1780 arrived. In fact Burke had scarcely begun his canvass before he decided it was hopeless to stand for re-election. But before declining he had seized the occasion to deliver what Fox's biographer calls, "the most celebrated, if not the finest, speech that a member ever made to his constituents."⁽¹⁾ During the course of his remarks the statesman, who was so soon to be spurned, said:

"I did not obey your instructions: No. I conformed to the instructions of truth and nature, and maintained your interest, against your opinions, with a constancy that became me...I knew that you chose me, in my place, along with others, to be a pillar of the state, and not a weathercock on the top of the edifice, exalted for my levity and versatility, and of no use but to indicate the shiftings of every fashionable gale."⁽²⁾ He concluded with a poignant passage which went home to the roots of their disaffection. It is reminiscent of that "hunt of obloquy" which he once said had dogged his steps throughout life. It could well be put into the politician's manual under the heading of a statesman's consolation.

"The charges against me, are all of one kind, that I have pushed the principles of general justice and benevolence too far; further than a cautious policy would warrant; and

-
1. G.O.Trevelyan, The Early History Of Charles James Fox, Page 420.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 418.
Speech At Bristol Previous To The Election, 1780.

further than the opinions of many would go along with me,
--In every accident which may happen through life, in pain,
in sorrow, in depression, and distress--I will call to mind
this accusation; and be comforted."⁽¹⁾

Burke's connection with Bristol has been cited in this detail because it provides a view of his attitude toward the pressing problems of the period and because it was the acid test as to whether he would abide by his declared political principles. But to Burke himself the whole matter would rest on higher ground. In another connection he once said: "It will certainly be the duty of every man in the situation to which God has called him, to give his best opinion and advice upon the matter."⁽²⁾ He would only ask us to judge whether his course of action had been due to "an obstinate perseverance in error, or to a religious adherence to what appears to me truth and reason."⁽³⁾ If it is possible to state the matter in such neat alternatives, the writer is bound to give his assent to the second of Burke's propositions.

It is precisely for this reason that all his later writings must be taken seriously when he urges upon men a sense of political obligation which is based on their responsibility to God. "All who administer in the government of men, in which they stand in the person of God Himself...Such sublime principles ought to be infused into persons of exalted situations; and religious

-
1. Works, Volume III, Page 444.
Speech At Bristol Previous To The Election, 1780.
 2. Works, Volume V, Page 611.
Letter On The Duration Of Parliament.
 3. Works, Volume III, Page 242.
Speech On Conciliation With America.

establishments provided, that may continually revive and enforce them."⁽¹⁾ The schoolboy, who, at the age of fifteen, wrote the passage on the Christian's responsibility to God, was the same person who wrote in the Reflections nearly half a century later:

"All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with an idea that they act in trust; and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great Master, Author, and Founder of society."⁽²⁾

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 226.
Reflections.
 2. Ibid. Page 226.

J. The Extension of Political Responsibility
To The Affairs Of Empire

During the latter half of the eighteenth century a change came over the thought pattern of England in respect to its attitude toward the dominions beyond the seas. It is not too much to say that, Opportunity, being the first child of the wedding of the empire and colonial peoples, now had to share the nursery with a second child, whose name was Obligation. The search for paternity justly leads to many doors. The verdict of history is that Burke remains a foremost candidate for the office.

It is instructive to note here that Burke ploughed a lonely and unprofitable furrow through the long years spent in opposition, and, with the collectors making frequent trips from London to Beaconsfield to salt the wounds of personal finances, which were constantly in arrears, he looked upon the returning nabobs with a righteous censure, not unmixed with a dash of jealousy. Yet, when that disclaimer of pure motives is allowed, it must be remembered that it was years before the Hastings trial when he said: "Shew me a government and I will shew a trust...This is a principle inspired by the Divine Author of all good; it is felt in the heart; it is recognized by reason; it is established by consent. ⁽¹⁾" It is on the broad canvass of India where he paints his masterpiece, a fitting title for which would be Trusteeship.

That Burke considered his relations to Indian affairs to be of prime importance in any assise of his political life we can

-
1. Speeches, Volume II, Page 257-258.
Report Of Burke's Speech On Seizure of Private Property
In St. Eustatius, 1781.

have no doubt. Before the verdict on Hastings had been returned he wrote privately: "For the last two years of my public service, I have been most painfully and disagreeably employed in bringing to a conclusion that principal act which is to be the glory or the shame of my whole public life."⁽¹⁾ And again he refers to "...the affairs of India. They are those on which I value myself the most."⁽²⁾

Every schoolboy knows the picture of Burke calling heaven and earth to witness against the "high crimes and misdemeanours" of Warren Hastings. It deserves to be as fully known that Francis had Burke's ear from the beginning, and that many of the latter's fulminations were only rebroadcasts of that whisper, greatly amplified. Francis' intense personal hatred of Hastings, and the unexplainable grip which he had on Burke's mind, go far to explain the excesses and open errors to which Burke gave expression during the trial. However, as a reward for the dogged reading of his interminable speeches during the eight weary years over which the sitting of the court was spread, one has before his mind the classic statements of the responsibility of the home government to its colonial dependencies. How did the problem arise?

"By conquest, which is a more immediate designation of the hand of God, the conqueror succeeds to all the painful duties and subordination to the power of God, which belonged to the sovereign whom he has displaced, just as if he had

-
1. Works, Volume II, Page 309.
Burke To John Bowles, 12 March, 1796.
 2. Works, Volume V, Page 227.
Letter To A Noble Lord.

come in by the positive law of some descent or some
(1)
election."

This facile identification of conquest with the hand of God is itself open to judgment, but he was making a strong point and setting the stage for what was to come: "He (Hastings) has told your lordships, in his defence, that actions in Asia do not bear the same moral qualities which the same actions would bear in Europe. My Lords, we positively deny that principle...we are to let your lordships know that these gentlemen have formed a plan of geographical morality, by which the duties of men, in public and in private situations, are not to be governed by their relation to the great Governor of the universe..."
(2)

We hear again the familiar theme that the worship of God is not confined to the sanctuary: "My Lords, in this temple we shall not forget that his (God's) most distinguished attribute is justice, and that the first link in the chain by which we are held to the Supreme Judge of all, is justice; and that it is in this solemn temple of representative justice we may best give Him
(3)
praise, because we can here best imitate his divine attributes." And here is the resurgence of his attitude so familiar when he was speaking of American affairs and urging Parliament not to rest its case on an abstract right: "My Lords, the business of this day is not the business of this man--it is not solely whether the prisoner at the bar be found innocent, or guilty; but whether

-
1. Works, Volume VII, Page 358.
Speech The Fourth Day Of Impeachment.
 2. Ibid. Page 353.
 3. Works, Volume VII, Page 474.
Speech On Sixth Charge.

millions of mankind shall be made miserable, or happy."⁽¹⁾

Perhaps the peroration which sums up the obligation of the government in light of its responsibility under God is that which Burke made before the actual trial began: "I swear...that the wrongs done to humanity in the eastern world, shall be avenged on those who have inflicted them. They will find, when the measure of their iniquity is full, that Providence was not asleep. The wrath of Heaven will sooner or later fall upon a nation, that suffers, with impunity, its rulers thus to oppress the weak and innocent."⁽²⁾

With this telescopic account of the proceedings we must turn from the efforts of the orator to the judgment of the court and of the historians.⁽³⁾ But before we hear the court or the judgment of history it is revealing to inspect a letter which Burke wrote to his Quaker friend Shackleton at the outset of the trial in 1788, "We have an India fox to hunt, but he will earth in strong ministerial and professional party ground, and we shall not be able to dig him out."⁽⁴⁾

That prophecy was fulfilled exactly. Hastings went free, and Burke received only the even-handed thanks of the house for his part in the prosecution. Yet the monument which history

-
1. Works, Volume VII, Page 280.
Speech On The Third Day.
 2. Speeches, Volume III, Page 86. Report Of Burke's Speech On Inquiry Into The Conduct of Hastings.
 3. Laski says: "I think it is both true and significant to say that no historian has ever defended Hastings who was not a British citizen; and that no Indian scholar who has studied this period has ever differed from Burke's conclusions."
H. J. Laski, Edmund Burke, An Address, Page 6.
 4. The Leadbeater Papers, Volume II, Page 140.
Burke To Richard Shackleton, 9 May, 1788.

has erected does not stand as a tribute to the doubtful virtues of Hastings, but to the enlarged views of his accuser.

"That Hastings was acquitted was immaterial. The lesson of his impeachment had been taught with sufficient force-- the great lesson that Asiatics have rights, and that Europeans have obligations; and that the authority of the English legislature is not more entirely a trust for the benefit of this country, than the dominion of the English in India is a trust for the benefit of the inhabitants of India."⁽¹⁾

Morley made that observation nearly a century ago. Yet it had been said before and it has continued to remain the essential consensus of the keenest students of the period. A twentieth century point of view is expressed by Trevelyan: "Burke's imaginative grasp of the moral obligations of Empire did a great work in instructing the statesmen and public at home that they had become, before God and man, the trustees of helpless millions. This new and vital idea, the basis of our Empire in Africa as well as in India, first made headway in public opinion during the era of Burke and Wilberforce. But the spirit of prophecy in a hot Irish heart is liable to strange aberrations, and Burke allowed himself to be almost totally misled as to what Hastings stood for in the East."⁽²⁾

The "hot Irish heart" had indeed run the full gamut of invective against the former governor general. Burke was called

-
1. John Morley, Burke, A Historical Study, Page 216-217.
 2. G. M. Trevelyan, British History In The Nineteenth Century, Page 48.

to order by the court for his excesses. Fanny Burney, who in earlier days had been an ardent admirer, heard his vicious attacks on Hastings with growing animosity. All that is solidly in the record. But when these truths have been granted, there still remains the centrality of the lesson that "Asiatics have rights, and Europeans have obligations." To any one searching for the staff of that banner which henceforth waved over the affairs of the empire, Burke would simply have pointed to his basic assumption, "this is a principle inspired by the Divine Author of all good."⁽¹⁾

1. Speeches, Volume II, Page 257-258.
Report of Burke's Speech On Seizure Of Private
Property In St. Eustatius, 1781.

K. Humanitarian Motifs Grounded In Religious Faith.

The introduction of the theme of humanitarianism after having described the main theses of Burke's thought may be compared with the addition of a coda when the leading themes of the symphony have been fully developed. But just as the faithful musician is not free to stop playing until he comes to the end of the score, so the student of Burke must follow on to write this relevant footnote to all his thought. The symphony could be understood and appreciated without the coda, that is true. So could Burke's thought, if Laski's judgment is to be trusted: "A good case might indeed be made out for the thesis that what there is of liberalism in Burke derives rather from the impulse of compassion than from any logical sense of right."⁽¹⁾ We will therefore not be surprised to find Burke advocating some humanitarian causes which were breaking through the static assumptions of the century whose essential structure he all but worshipped.

One of these causes which enlisted his ardent support was the correction of the slave trade. Burke proposed a code which would reform many abuses of the trade but it is in the preamble to the code that we find his choicest statement on the subject: "Whereas it is expedient, and conformable to the principles of true religion and morality, and to the rules of sound policy, to put an end to all traffic in the persons of men, and to the detention of their said persons in a state of slavery..."⁽²⁾

1. H. J. Laski, Letters of Edmund Burke, Page XV.

2. Works, Volume V, Page 591.
Sketch Of The Negro Code.

Burke did not believe the system could be abolished at once, but he always spoke against its existence as being morally wrong for a commonwealth which claimed to have religious foundations. He was referring specifically to the slave trade, and to his own proposed code for its reform, when he wrote to Dundas: "I confess I trust infinitely more (according to the sound principles of those, who have ever at any time meliorated the state of mankind) to the effect and influence of religion, than to all the rest of the regulations put together."⁽¹⁾

Not only the evils of the slave trade but the brutal treatment accorded to criminals was revolting to Burke. When he observed that convicts who were being transported to distant penal establishments were all crowded together, without regard for the wide range of crimes committed, he pled that different classes of transportation be provided according to the seriousness of the offences. On hearing a report that the mob had set on a man in the pillory so that he died of the maltreatment, Burke immediately moved for the abolition of punishment by pillory. The harsh laws against insolvents were the objects of his reforming concern, Laski would say from a sense of compassion, the writer would suggest from a sense of kinship.

Burke's sympathy for the poor was abiding. However, his stricture on a proposal which was once advanced for their relief gives a twinge to a Christian conscience. In a time of great distress among the poor he wrote that it was a duty "manfully to

1. Works, Volume V, Page 589.
Burke To Henry Dundas, April, 1792.

resist the very first idea, speculative or practical, that it is within the competence of government, taken as government, or even of the rich, as rich, to supply to the poor those necessities which it has pleased Divine Providence for a while to withhold from them."⁽¹⁾ Of course it must be noted that he wrote this in defence of his economic views, and his abhorrence of any suggestion that government should interfere with "the laws of commerce, which are the laws of nature, and consequently the laws of God."⁽²⁾ Halevy holds that: "Burke may be taken to be chronologically the first to interpret political economy as a pure conservative orthodoxy."⁽³⁾

He might defend his economic theory on the basis of his whole political thought, but to attribute the sufferings of the poor to the pleasure of God sounds blasphemous in the twentieth century, if not in the age of reason. It should be added, however, that no one was ever more liberal from his own purse than was Burke. He was generous to a fault. He drained his own resources to feed the children of French refugees. At the very time he was writing the above tract in opposition to government interference he established a system among the nobles for feeding the poor of the countryside.

The slaves, the insolvents, the abused criminals, the poor, and even those rioters who openly threatened his life were the objects of his active concern. In 1780 the mob had placed his name among those of their potential victims, had surrounded him

1. Works, Volume V, Page 203.
Thoughts And Details On Scarcity.

2. Ibid. Page 203-204.

3. Elie Halevy, The Growth Of Philosophic Radicalism, Page 230.

in the street, and had finally forced him to barricade himself in the town house of Lord Rockingham. Yet, when the proper course for the government to take against the criminals was being debated, Burke entered a plea for mercy. There was a great cry in some quarters for mass executions, but Burke urged that the number be kept very low. Why? "Men who see their lives respected and thought of value by others, come to respect that gift of God themselves."⁽¹⁾

Magnus says of Burke, "The most urgent need of his nature was always some great cause to serve--some monstrous injustice to repair."⁽²⁾ We recognize this element in any romanticist, and Burke must be put down as the forerunner of Wordsworth, Scott, Coleridge, and the rest. Still, when the psychological phenomenon of "a crusade" has been isolated, the source of the motif in Burke runs right back to his religious consciousness. MacCunn defines the relationship thus: "He had the religious faith which, when it strikes alliance with the idealising spirit, makes all the difference between the ideals that are but subjective dreams, and ideals which are beliefs that nerve to action."⁽³⁾

The conclusion must surely be that, if the prophetic note in classical Christianity was so far submerged in his thought that Burke could pronounce divine approval on eighteenth century conditions, still the record will always reveal a genuinely religious

-
1. Works, Volume V, Page 580.
Some Thoughts On The Approaching Executions, 1780.
 2. Philip Magnus, Edmund Burke, A Life, Preface, page xii.
 3. John MacCunn, Op. Cit., Page 271.

basis for his humanitarian motifs. MacIver speaks to the first of these two propositions: "It was no service to our understanding when Burke enveloped once more in mystic obscurity the office of government and in the sphere of politics appealed once more against reason to tradition and religion."⁽¹⁾ For the positive note we let Burke be his own apologist, and with his words, so apposite to this closing section, we draw the curtain on this aspect of his life and thought. "Christianity is not a speculative science but a practical obligation."⁽²⁾

1. R. M. MacIver, The Modern State, Page 448.
2. Annual Review, 1760, Page 206.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ATTITUDE OF BURKE TOWARD THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

The presuppositions of Burke's political philosophy made his militant advocacy of the established church inevitable. In his mind, since the civil society was itself the product of the Divine Will, it must have its spiritual foundations objectified and symbolized. Beginning with this view of the spiritual nature of the state, which we examined in the previous chapter, the established church becomes the logical outward expression of this inner nature of the civil society. Ten years before his voice was first heard in the House of Commons, Burke had written: "There is nothing of more consequence in a state than the ecclesiastical establishment."⁽¹⁾ From his earliest writings until the last letters were penned at Beaconsfield nearly half a century later, he referred to the established church as he characterized it in the Reflections: "the first of our prejudices...I speak of it first. It is first, and last, and midst in our minds."⁽²⁾⁽³⁾

It was the Clerical Petition of 1772 which provided Burke with the situation in which he could define his position with reference to the establishment. The petition was but the outward sign of a deep dissatisfaction within the ranks of the established church and of a desire for "comprehension." The Unitarian and

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 285.
Essay Towards an Abridgment of English History.
 2. Works, Volume IV, page 225-226.
Reflections.
 3. Usually referred to as the Feathers Tavern Petition, from the name of the inn where the clergy met to agree on the petition.

Arian motifs had done their work and, while the depths of theological speculation were not for Burke, still he saw in the petition a breach in the wall, and he rushed to the defence. The petitioning clergy, in desiring to make subscription to the Scriptures a substitute for subscription to the thirty-nine articles, furnished the opening for this telling thrust:

"The petitioners are so sensible of the force of these arguments, that they do admit of one subscription, that is to the Scripture. I shall not consider how forcibly this argument militates with their whole principle against subscription as an usurpation on the rights of Providence...They dispute only the extent of the subscription; they therefore tacitly admit the equity of the principle itself." (1)

Burke was careful to make the point that the church had the right to alter her liturgy and her statement of doctrine. "The church like every body corporate, may alter her laws without changing her identity...as a church, she claims, and has always exercised a right of reforming whatever appears amiss in her doctrine, her discipline, or her rites." (2) Such changes, however, were to be made only when they reflected the clearly defined will of a majority, and this was the basic principle he was establishing.

"The ground for a legislative alteration of a legal establishment is this, and this only; that you find the inclinations of the majority of the people, concurring with your own sense of the intolerable nature of the abuse, are in favour of a change. If this be the case in the present instance, certainly you ought to make the alteration that is proposed to satisfy your own consciences, and to give content to your people.

But if you have no evidence of this nature, it ill becomes your gravity, on the petition of a few gentlemen, to listen to anything that tends to shake one of the capital pillars of the state, and alarm the body of

1. Works, Volume VI, Page 88-89.
Speech On The Petition Of The Anglican Clergy, 1772.

2. Ibid. Page 82.

your people upon that one ground in which every hope and fear, every interest, passion, prejudice, every thing which can affect the human breast, are all involved together." (1)

Burke's powers of irony and sarcasm come forward when he answers the petitioners' plea that subscription to the articles works a hardship on them. "The hardship amounts to this, that the people of England are not taxed two shillings on the pound to pay them for teaching, as divine truths, their own particular fancies....They want to be preferred clergymen in the church of England, as by law established; but their consciences will not suffer them to conform to the doctrines and practices of that church; that is, they want to be teachers in a church to which they do not belong; and it is an odd sort of hardship. They want to receive the emoluments appropriated for teaching one set of doctrines, whilst they are teaching another."⁽²⁾ If it is a hardship to remain in the established church, he reminds them that there are many other churches to which they can turn, and if they do not find one that suits their fancy they are perfectly at liberty to found a church of their own.

He insists that the question is not, therefore, one of toleration, but a question which vitally affects the establishment itself. Toleration has been provided for; it is the established church which must be safe-guarded. "The matter therefore does not concern toleration, but establishment; and it is not the rights of private conscience that are in question, but the propriety of the terms which are proposed by law as a title to

1. Works, Volume VI, Page 84-85.
Speech On The Petition Of The Anglican Clergy, 1772.

2. Ibid. Page 85.

public emoluments; so that the complaint is not that there is not toleration of diversity in opinion, but that diversity in opinion is not rewarded by bishoprics, rectories, and collegiate stalls."⁽¹⁾ The peroration from the speech, which has become a classic, neatly summarizes his argument: "Dissent, not satisfied with toleration, is not conscience, but ambition."⁽²⁾

The petition was rejected by a vote of 217 to 71. Sykes records that "The eloquence of Burke, the conservatism of the faithful laity of the House of Commons, and the prevalent persuasion of the wisdom of the principle 'quieta non movere' offered a barrier for the defence of the established order in church no less than in state."⁽³⁾ But the established church of the day could not be satisfied with such a calm appraisal as that which the historian has given. On all sides the clergy who had opposed the petition regarded Burke as their leading spokesman in parliament. The following is typical of the messages which came to him after the petition had been defeated. "The Church of Christ, as well as the Church of England, owes you her best thanks for your strenuous defence of her doctrines."⁽⁴⁾

The next year saw Burke pronouncing a panegyric on the Church of England which is often held up as the ideal for the church as portrayed by one of her most faithful sons. The setting was the application of the Dissenters for relief, which

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 87.
Speech On The Petition Of The Anglican Clergy, 1772.
 2. Ibid. Page 86.
 3. Norman Sykes, Church And State In England In The Eighteenth Century, Page 390.
 4. Dr. Hallifax to Burke, February 27, 1772.
The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.

will be considered in detail in the following chapter. Burke saw in the application no threat to the established church or to the state, and so heartily supported it. It was while speaking in support of relief for the Dissenters that he gave expression to his hopes for the established church.

"I wish to see the established church of England great and powerful; I wish to see her foundations laid low and deep, that she may crush the giant powers of rebellious darkness; I would have her head raised up to that Heaven to which she conducts us. I would have her open wide her hospitable gates by a noble and liberal comprehension;

But I would have no breaches in her wall; I would have her cherish all those who are within, and pity all those who are without; I would have her a common blessing to the world, an example, if not an instructor to those who have not the happiness to belong to her; I would have her give a lesson of peace to mankind, that a vexed and wandering generation might be taught to seek for repose and toleration in the maternal bosom of Christian charity, and not in the harlot lap of infidelity and indifference." (1)

Right on through his career, Burke viewed every piece of legislation dealing with religious matters from the standpoint of these earlier declarations. As we shall see in the following chapter, he explained his reversal of position with respect to relief for the Dissenters on the grounds that to grant it in 1790 would weaken the safeguards of the Established Church. In fact, he was quite prepared with a course of action to defend the establishment, if Fox's motion to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts in that year had passed. During the course of his speech in opposition to repeal, Burke declared that he had in his pocket a substitute test which he intended to offer if

1. Works, Volume VI, Page 99.
Speech On The Bill For Relief Of Dissenters, 1773.

Fox's motion should prevail. This is the test which Burke intended to propose in 1790 if the Test and Corporation Acts had been repealed:

"I A.B. do, in the presence of God, sincerely profess and believe that a religious establishment in this state is not contrary to the law of God, or disagreeable to the law of nature or to the true principles of the Christian religion, or that it is noxious to the community; and I do sincerely promise and engage, before God, that I never will, by any conspiracy, connivance, or political device whatever, attempt or abet others in any attempt to subvert the constitution of the Church of England, as the same is now by law established,

And that I will not employ any office or influence, which I may derive from any office corporate, or any other office, which I hold, or shall hold, under his majesty, his heirs and successors, to destroy and subvert the same; or to cause members to be elected into any corporation, or into parliament, give my vote in the election of any member, or members, of parliament, or into any office, for or on account of their attachment to any other, or different religious opinions or establishments or with any hope that they may promote the same to the prejudice of the established church, but will dutifully and peaceably content myself with my private liberty of conscience, as the same is allowed by law. So help me God." (1)

By the year 1790, however, the cry of "Church and King" was being re-echoed throughout England. Any proposal to alter the existing order had to be able to pass the loyalty test that it was not infected with the French spirit. The verdict of guilt by association, so familiar in the twentieth century, always loomed as a real possibility even for constructive measures. Outside parliament, the church could now count on its old ally, the mob. Remembering the Gordon Riots of just a decade before, Burke must have been disgusted by the mob spirit of the Birmingham riots. But "the church in danger" was the cry under which

1. Speeches, Volume III, Page 482.

the rioters did their work. One of the popular songs of the period was:

"History thy page unfold;
Did not their sires of old
Murder their king?
And they would overthrow
King, Lords, and Bishops too,
And while they gave the blow
Loyally sing,
O Lord our God arise..." (1)

Just one year before the mob had thus become inflamed against the church's enemies within the country, Burke had taken up his pen to write the Reflections and to hold before all Europe his views of the establishment. "They (the people of England) do not consider their church establishment as convenient, but as essential to their state." (2) And again: "We will have her to exalt her mitred front in courts and parliaments. We will have her mixed throughout the whole mass of life, and blended with all the classes of society. The people of England will show to the haughty potentates of the world, and to their talking sophisters, that a free, a generous, an informed nation honours the high magistrates of its church." (3)

When war with France was finally declared in 1793, Burke was jubilant. The inevitable result for the established church is portrayed by Williams: "When the violence of the French Revolution became apparent, and England was plunged into desperate war, one marked result was the strengthening of attachment to our ancient institutions; the overthrow of the French Church

-
1. Quoted by C.J.Abbey and J.H.Overton, The English Church In The Eighteenth Century, Volume II, Page 405.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 232.
Reflections.
 3. Ibid. Page 235.

increased the stability of the English."⁽¹⁾

With the church and state thus united against the common enemy across the channel, the romantic motif in Burke knew no bounds. Writing of these institutions on which depended the security of England, and of the Duke of Bedford, he employs this language: "As long as the well-compacted structure of church and state, the sanctuary, the holy of holies of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power, a fortress at once and a temple, shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Zion..."⁽²⁾

In Burke's mind nothing less than Christian civilization was at stake. That phrase "a fortress at once and a temple" runs right back to his statement on the floor of Commons: "In a Christian Commonwealth the church and the state are one and the same thing, being different integral parts of the same whole."⁽³⁾ He was to pass from the scene before the fortress and the temple were finally delivered.

Any delineation of Burke's attitude toward the established church would be incomplete without making clear several additional points. The first is that he championed, not only the Church of England, but every establishment. In fact, he was eager to make this perfectly clear. "The merit of mine (his pension) was in defending the whole of the national church of my own time and my own country, and the whole of the national

-
1. A.T.P.Williams, The Anglican Tradition, Page 70-71.
 2. Works, Volume V, Page 238.
Letter To A Noble Lord.
 3. Works, Volume VI, Page 102.
Speech On The Petition Of The Unitarians, 1792.

(1)

churches of all countries. Again, he finds the basis for establishment to be prescription. "All the principal religions in Europe stand upon one common bottom. The support that the whole, or the favoured parts, may have in the secret dispensations of Providence it is impossible to tell; but humanly speaking, they are all prescriptive religions. They have all stood long enough to make prescription and its chain of legitimate prejudices their mainstay."⁽²⁾

Another point in Burke's attitude toward the church, which could scarcely be called a source of its strength, is his failure to grasp its prophetic function. "No sound ought to be heard in the church but the healing voice of Christian charity. The cause of civil liberty and civil government gains as little as that of religion by this confusion of duties...Surely the church is a place where one day's truce ought to be allowed to the dissensions and animosities of mankind."⁽³⁾ This is surely Burke's consistent attitude throughout. Yet it has been precisely the limiting of the church to this conception of its duty which has brought down the sharpest criticism upon the church.

This is closely allied to the fact that Burke certainly viewed the establishment as a stabilizing and conservative factor in eighteenth century England. Believing as he did that the English system had reached its zenith, he was quick to see that

-
1. Works, Volume V, Page 233.
Letter To A Noble Lord.
 2. Works, Volume VI, Page 43.
Burke to William Smith, 1795.
 3. Works, Volume IV, Page 159-160.
Reflections.

the church could be a wall of defence. There is essential truth in the following statement by Cobban, though it may be stronger than the facts of Burke's personal religion would warrant. "It cannot be denied that the political benefits conferred by religious organizations, in particular by the Church of England, tend in his mind, as in the minds of most of his contemporaries, to outweigh spiritual values."⁽¹⁾ Stephen is almost paraphrasing Burke when he says: "His firm conviction that the stability of the social fabric depended on the vitality of the national religion made him look askance upon the freethinkers."⁽²⁾

Even when these qualifications have been noted, still Burke's position in the history of the established church in the eighteenth century is so dominant that Sykes concludes his study of the period with the statement: "Edmund Burke...set before churchmen an ideal of the Church no less than a defence of its establishment; and by loyalty to which ideal the Ecclesia Anglicana of his age may consent not unworthily to be judged in the operation of its endeavours to work out its own salvation and that of its generation."⁽³⁾ Then follows this quotation from Burke concerning the established church, which is Sykes' closing paragraph in his survey of church and state in the eighteenth century:

"If you think it to be an invaluable blessing, a way fully sufficient to nourish a manly, rational, solid, and at the same time humble piety; if you find it well fitted to the frame and pattern of our civil constitution; if you find it a barrier against fanaticism, infidelity, and atheism;

-
1. Alfred Cobban, Edmund Burke And The Revolt Against The Eighteenth Century, Page 239-240.
 2. Leslie Stephen, English Thought In The Eighteenth Century, Volume II, Page 229.
 3. Norman Sykes, Church And State In The Eighteenth Century In England, Page 427-428.

If you find that it furnishes support to the human mind in the afflictions and distresses of the world, consolation in sickness, pain, poverty, and death; if it dignifies our nature with the hope of immortality, leaves inquiry free, whilst it preserves an authority to teach, where authority only can teach, 'communia altaria, aequae ac patriam, diligite, colite, foveite'". (1)

Among all the champions of the Anglican Church in her many times of trouble, Burke has his high place firmly secured. The establishment was integral to his thought as a philosopher; it was the object of his crusading loyalty as a politician. Yet there will always remain several qualifications to this appraisal. He defended every established church, in every country, regardless of its doctrine. The basis of his defence was prescription, whereas a more ultimate spiritual reference provides a more lasting foundation for any church. His view of the establishment as the buttress of the prevailing social structure militated against the church's fulfilling its prophetic function. Nevertheless his life was a faithful witness to his own declaration: "I am by choice, as well as by education and habit, a very attached son of the Church of England."⁽²⁾

-
1. Sykes, Op. Cit., Page 428.
The original appears in Burke's Works, Volume VI, Page 111. Speech On The Petition Of The Unitarians, 1793.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 392.
Burke to Rev. John Erskine, April, 1779.

CHAPTER V.

THE ATTITUDE OF BURKE TOWARD THE DISSENTING CHURCHES

When Burke came on the political scene as the oracle of the Whigs, he naturally inherited the time-honored alliance between that group and the Dissenters. Nor was this alliance uncongenial to his mind, for in those early days of his career he was honestly seeking to champion the extension of religious toleration, always within the limits which we have observed in chapter two. The provisions of the Toleration Act of 1689 had left so many unanswered questions that what we now know as complete religious freedom and toleration was not to be the achievement of the eighteenth but of the nineteenth century. It is true that "The provisions (of the Toleration Act) removed a vast mass of evil without shocking a vast mass of prejudice."⁽¹⁾ But while much distress was alleviated, still dissent lived on under something of the onus of second-class citizenship.

Dissent was not only a religious point of view, however; it was rapidly becoming a political power. The relation of this section of the country to the Whig party is aptly portrayed by Trevelyan:

"In self-protection against an unfriendly world the Protestant Dissenters sought refuge as clients of the Whig aristocracy. They did not come empty-handed, for they could offer their patrons good value at election time. They were many of them of the rank of society likely to have votes as forty-shilling freeholders in the counties, or as possessors of one or other of the numerous varieties of fancy franchises

1. Dictionary of English History, Page 1038.
(The quotation is ascribed to Macaulay.)

in the boroughs. Although they formed perhaps a twentieth part of the nation in numbers, they possessed much more than a twentieth part of its wealth and voting power." (1)

The whole problem of the dissenting interest in the eighteenth century is a very involved one, and it is not within the scope of this study to make a complete presentation of that subject. (2) Burke's attitude toward the Dissenters runs the full gamut from that of an ardent advocate in the early seventies to a position of almost fanatical opposition in the nineties. This change in Burke's relation to dissent constitutes one of the chief grounds on which he has been charged with inconsistency. If we consider in a chronological sequence the leading political events which concerned dissent during his career, we will discover, not only the reason for his change in attitude, but a legitimate argument that the charge of inconsistency against him on this particular issue is not wholly justified.

From the standpoint of his concern for the established church, we have examined in some detail in the previous chapter Burke's speech in opposition to the Clerical Petition in 1772. It was during the course of this speech that he injected a remark which encouraged the Dissenters to apply for relief. One member, speaking in opposition to the bill, and therefore on the same side of the question as Burke, had made the point that if this petition of the Anglican clergy were granted it would be a threat to the establishment, since Dissenters would logically

1. G. M. Trevelyan, Blenheim, Page 191.

2. For the latter half of the century, the writer has found Lincoln's English Dissent, 1763-1800, the most helpful single volume. Lincoln's bibliography is especially comprehensive.

be relieved also. Burke spoke directly to this reference, saying: "Let him recollect, along with the injuries, the services which Dissenters have done to our church and to our state. If they have once destroyed, more than once they have saved them. This is but common justice, which they and all mankind have a right to."⁽¹⁾

There is little doubt but that this statement by Burke heartened the Dissenters to apply for relief from subscription, which they promptly proceeded to do. The Clerical Petition had been debated in February, and the Dissenters hastily brought forward their application in April, requesting that a declaration of faith in the Scriptures as the word of God be substituted for subscription to the articles. Burke of course supported it, and it easily passed the House of Commons. It was defeated in the House of Lords, due largely to the opposition of the court and the bishops.

In March of 1773 the bill was brought in again, but it had the great handicap that there was a division in the ranks of the Dissenters, and some of them even petitioned against it. Burke did his utmost to secure its passage. "All seem agreed that the law, as it stands, inflicting penalties on all religious teachers and on schoolmasters, who do not sign the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, ought not to be executed...A penal law, not ordinarily put in execution, seems to me a very absurd and a very dangerous thing...It reflects exceedingly on the wisdom, and consequently derogates not a little from the authority of a

1. Works, Volume VI, page 82.
Speech On The Petition Of The Anglican Clergy, 1772.

legislature, who can at once forbid and suffer, and in the same breath promulgate penalty and indemnity to the same persons,
(1)
and for the very same actions."

The portion of his speech which is most significant for our study has to do with the basis on which the state has a right to put restraints on dissent. This is the very ground on which he will oppose relief of Dissenters nearly twenty years later.

"In my opinion, sir, a magistrate, whenever he goes to put any restraint upon religious freedom, can only do it upon this ground, that the person dissenting does not dissent from the scruples of ill-formed conscience, but from a party ground of dissension, in order to raise a faction in the state.

We give, with regard to rites and ceremonies, an indulgence to tender consciences. But if dissent is at all punished in any country, if at all it can be punished upon any pretence, it is upon a presumption, not that a man is supposed to differ conscientiously from the establishment, but that he resists truth for the sake of faction; that he abets diversity of opinions in religion to distract the state, and to destroy the peace of his country." (2)

Burke could see in dissent no endeavour "to raise a faction in the state" in 1773, and certainly no threat "to destroy the peace of his country." The bill was passed in the Commons as it had been passed the year before, but it was rejected in the House of Lords by the decisive vote of 86 to 28. Nevertheless Burke had played his role in the Clerical Petition and in the Dissenting Application of strenuously defending the established church, while advocating relief to the Dissenters who stood outside the establishment.

This attitude he steadily maintained, and it is reflected

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 93.
Speech On The Bill For Relief Of Dissenters, 1773.
 2. Ibid. Page 95-96.

in a letter which Burke wrote to Edmund Pery, speaker of the House in Ireland, in 1778. A measure for the relief of Roman Catholics in Ireland was up for debate, and it included a clause for the relief of Dissenters in Ireland. Burke discussed the measure with Lord North, and reports both his own and North's attitude as follows: "The thing which seemed to affect him (North) most, was the offence that would be taken at the repeal by the leaders among the Church clergy here on the one hand, and on the other the steps which would be taken for its repeal in England in the next session, in consequence of the repeal in Ireland. I assured him with great truth, that we had no idea among the Whigs of moving the repeal of the test. I confessed very freely, for my own part, that if it were brought in, I should certainly vote for it."⁽¹⁾

Burke is here saying that he would vote for the repeal of the sacramental test required of Dissenters, though it did not come before the House for another decade. In the following year, 1779, the relief applied for by the Dissenters in 1772 and 1773 was granted, so that henceforth they were required only to attest their belief in the Scriptures rather than to subscribe to the articles. The important thing to note is that Burke had championed the Dissenters' application for relief and had declared that he would vote even for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.

1. Works, Volume V, Page 553.
Burke to Edmund Pery, 1778.

The next significant event in Burke's relation to dissent took place in 1787 when the first attempt since 1739 was made to secure the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Burke did not participate in the debate, and did not vote, a fact which was a severe blow to any hopes for repeal. Among the Wentworth Woodhouse manuscripts there is a hitherto unpublished letter of Burke's which is most revealing at this point. It is addressed to Richard Bright, the chairman of a committee of dissenters at Bristol.

"There are no men on earth to whom I have been more attached and with a more sincere esteem and affection, than to some among the Dissenters. From my earliest years my connexions have been very much with them. I flatter myself that I have still friends of that denomination. They were once indulgent enough to me to think that (according to my scanty power of obliging) they had some sort of obligation to me. In the year 1784 a great change took place and all of them who seemed to act in corps, have held me out to publick odium...Though they have failed in wholly excluding me, with all the contumely and disgrace which they intended, from the public service."⁽¹⁾

This bit of personal history reveals one of the causes for the coolness which had developed between the Dissenters and their earlier champion.

The vote in 1787 was 178 against, with an even 100 favoring repeal. So encouraged were the Dissenters with this showing

1. Burke To Richard Bright, May 9, 1789.
The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.

that they brought in another bill in May of 1789, the month in which the States General met in Paris, and this time the vote was 122 opposed, with 102 in support. The victory of the Dissenters seemed almost at hand, so that they bent every effort to insure repeal in 1790. But before we turn to the debate of that year, and the leading part played by Burke, it is significant to consider a sermon preached by a leading Dissenter and a letter written by Burke which the sermon provoked.

The sermon was preached by Richard Price on November 4, 1789, before the Society For Commemorating The Revolution of 1688. Paine's biographer, in referring to the sermon, says: "This was the red rag that drew Burke into the arena."⁽¹⁾ The following passage alone would have been enough to call forth all Burke's powers:

"What an eventful period is this! I am thankful that I have lived to see it; and I could almost say, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' I have lived to see...the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience.

Be encouraged, all ye friends of freedom, and writers in its defence! The times are auspicious. Your labours have not been in vain. Behold kingdoms, admonished by you, starting from sleep, breaking their fetters, and claiming justice from their oppressors! Behold, the light you have struck out, after setting America free, reflected to France, and there kindled into a blaze that lays despotism in the ashes, and warms and illuminates Europe!

Tremble all ye oppressors of the world! Take warning all ye supporters of slavish governments, and slavish hierarchies! Call no more (absurdly and wickedly)

1. M. D. Conway, The Life of Thomas Paine, Page 132.

Reformation, innovation. You cannot now hold the world in darkness. Struggle no longer against increasing light and liberality. Restore to mankind their rights; and consent to the correction of abuses, before they and you are destroyed together." (1)

Burke was to reply with many a purple passage, but his keenest critics could not maintain that he was answering an even-tempered discussion. Three months later he wrote to Sir Philip Francis: "Am I obliged to prove juridically the virtues of all those I shall see suffering every kind of wrong, and contumely, and risk of life, before I endeavour to interest others in their sufferings, and before I endeavour to excite horror against midnight assassins at back-stairs, and their more wicked abettors in pulpits?...But I intend no controversy with Dr. Price, or Lord Shelburne, or any other of their set. I mean to set in full view the danger from their wicked principles and their black hearts. I intend to state the true principles of our constitution in church and state, upon grounds opposite to theirs. If any one be the better for the example made of them, and for this exposition, well and good. I mean to do my best to expose them to the hatred, ridicule, and contempt of the whole world; as I always shall expose such calumniators, hypocrites, sowers of sedition, and approvers of murder and all its triumphs." (2)

Burke's opportunity to carry out these intentions was not to be long delayed. Two weeks after he wrote that letter to Francis, Fox moved the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.

-
1. Richard Price, "A Discourse On The Love Of Our Country." Contained in Hackney College Sermons, 1786-1791, Page 49-51.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 573 and 575.
Burke to Philip Francis, February 20, 1790.

He must have anticipated Burke's attack, for he endeavoured to make a distinction between the simple plea for the just rights of the main body of the Dissenters and the more radical attitude of men like Price and Priestly. Pitt continued the role of opposition which he had essayed in 1787. Burke then made the speech which was to characterize his attitude toward dissent for the remainder of his life.

He pointed out that if the motion for repeal had been brought forward ten years earlier he would have voted for it. This is in line with the letter to Edmund Pery in 1778, which we examined above. Now, however, he said, "a variety of circumstances made it appear imprudent to meddle with it."⁽¹⁾ Here Burke was returning to one of his first principles of political theory, his doctrine of circumstances. At the earlier period there had been no danger to church or state in the activity of the Dissenters; now they had become a threat. He referred specifically to Price and to Priestly, citing the latter's declaration "that he hated all religious establishments, and thought them sinful and idolatrous."⁽²⁾

Burke roundly attacked Dissenters as having become devotees of the doctrine of abstract rights. To Burke, whose antipathy to such doctrine we noted in chapter three, this was a blow at civilization itself. "Of all abstract principles, abstract principles of natural right -- which the Dissenters rested on as their strong hold -- were the most idle, because the most useless

1. Speeches, Volume III, Page 481.

2. Ibid. Page 479.

and the most dangerous to resort to. They superseded society, and broke asunder all those bonds which had formed the happiness of mankind for ages. He would venture to say, that if they were to go back abstractly, to original rights, there would be an end of all society."⁽¹⁾

Perhaps the most spectacular part of his speech came when he held up two catechisms, one written by Robinson, of Cambridge, and the other by Palmer, of Hackney. These catechisms, written by Dissenters for the education of their children, were sowing seeds of discontent with both the church and the state. "The first catechism, he observed, contained no precept of religion whatsoever. It consisted of one continued invective against kings and bishops, in which every thing was misrepresented and placed in the worst light. In short, it was a catechism of mianthropy, a catechism of anarchy, a catechism of confusion -- grossly libelling the national establishment in every part and passage; and these catechisms were to be put into the hands of Dissenters' children, who were thus to be taught in their infancy to lisp out censures and condemnations against the established church of England."⁽²⁾

When the vote was taken the greatest majority ever to oppose repeal was recorded. Only 105 votes were cast for the motion, while 294 were recorded in opposition. It was clear that the burden of the Test and Corporation Acts which rested on the Dissenters was not to be removed by that generation. Burke had actually given a preview of his Reflections which was published

1. Speeches, Volume III, Page 475-76.

2. Ibid. Page 477-478.

seven months later.

At the very outset of that work, he states that he had learned of a society of Dissenters which met annually to observe the Revolution of 1688. "But I never heard that any public measure, or political system, much less that the merits of the constitution of any foreign nation, had been the subject of a formal proceeding at their festivals; until, to my inexpressible surprise, I found them in a sort of public capacity, by a congratulatory address, giving an authoritative sanction to the proceedings of the National Assembly in France."⁽¹⁾ A few pages later, Burke takes note of the sermon preached by Price before the Revolutionary Society and pours his scorn upon it:

"I consider the address transmitted by the Revolution Society to the National Assembly, through Earl Stanhope, as originating in the principles of the sermon, and as a corollary from them. It was moved by the preacher of that discourse. It was passed by those who came reeking from the effect of the sermon, without any censure or qualification, expressed or implied...

I looked on that sermon as the public declaration of a man much connected with literary caballers, and intriguing philosophers; with political theologians, and theological politicians, both at home and abroad. I know they set him up as a sort of oracle; because, with the best intentions in the world, he naturally philippizes, and chants his prophetic song in exact unison with their designs...

That sermon is in a strain which I believe has not been heard in this kingdom, in any of the pulpits which are tolerated or encouraged in it, since the year 1648 when a predecessor of Dr. Price, the Reverend Hugh Peters, made the vault of the king's own chapel at St. James' ring with the honour and privilege of the saints, who, with the 'high praises of God in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hands, were to execute judgment on the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.'" (2)

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 155. Reflections.

2. Ibid. Page 159. (The quotation is from Psalm 149).

This linking of the Dissenters with the events of a century and a half earlier puts on Burke some measure of responsibility for the violence which accompanied the "church and state" cry in the early nineties which we must now consider. Before doing so, there is one more stinging reference to Price and the Dissenters, as the defenders of the principles of the French Revolution in England, which should be noted. "The political divine proceeds dogmatically to assert that, by the principles of the revolution, the people of England have acquired three fundamental rights, all of which, with him, compose one system, and lie together in one short sentence: namely, that we have acquired a right to choose our own governors, to cashier them for misconduct, and to frame a government for ourselves. This new, and hitherto unheard-of bill of rights, though made in the name of the whole people, belongs to those gentlemen and their faction only. The body of the people of England have no share in it. They utterly disclaim it. They will resist the practical assertion of it with their lives and fortunes."⁽¹⁾

Thus Burke's speech in opposition to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and his publication of the Reflections, added fuel to the fire of hatred that was mounting against the Dissenters. Lincoln says: "The Birmingham riots were a direct result of the counter-propaganda of the Repeal movement, and few Dissenters failed to realize their significance."⁽²⁾ Trevelyan is even more direct in naming Burke in connection with the rioting. "An unreasoned hatred of Dissenters, prevalent in the

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 163. Reflections.

2. Anthony Lincoln, English Dissent, 1763-1800, Page 267.

higher order of society and locally in the slum population, was stirred to fury by the lead that Burke had given against Parliamentary Reformers and friends of the French Revolution. (1)

It must have caused Burke no little uneasiness of mind when the mob burned Priestly's home in Birmingham in the summer of 1791. Burke had always viewed himself in the role of champion; now he appears as the abettor of a persecuting faction. Priestly was so enamored with the Revolution that he wrote to Burke: "These great events, in many respects unparalleled in all history, make a totally new, a most wonderful, and important era in the history of mankind. It is, to adopt your own rhetorical style, a change from darkness to light, from superstition to sound knowledge, and from a most debasing servitude to a state of the most exalted freedom." (2)

But Burke was not to be stopped in his crusade. In December of the very year of the worst rioting, he wrote: "This system (the French) has very many partisans in England, where they are formed into a body, comprehending most of the Dissenters of the three leading denominations." (3)

Four months later we see that Burke has thrown away the last check on his restraint when speaking of the danger that now threatens England. Writing to his son Richard, he says: "This affair at Birmingham which frightened them at first, now fortifies them. They come forth as persecuted men. They all, as fast as

-
1. George M. Trevelyan, British History In The Nineteenth Century, Page 63.
 2. Joseph Priestly, Letters To The Right Honourable Edmund Burke, Page 143-144.
 3. Works, Volume IV, Page 558-559. Thoughts on French Affairs.

they can meet, take up Priestly, and avowedly set him up as their head. They are preparing to renew the fourteenth of July. At Manchester they have advertized their thanks to Mr. Thomas Paine for his second work -- more infamous, if possible, than the first. They keep up their French correspondence as before. In short, the Unitarian Society, from whence all these things originate, are as zealous as their brethern at Constantinople; and, if care is not taken, I should think it very probable that you may live to see Christianity as effectually extirpated out of this country as it is out of France."⁽¹⁾

He was to have one more opportunity in the Commons to vent his wrath on this group of Dissenters. In May of 1792, just three months after the above letter to Richard was written, Fox moved that the obsolete and unenforced laws which made denial of the Trinity a penal offence be removed from the Statute Book. This provoked Burke's speech in opposition, which we noted in the previous chapter from the standpoint of the establishment.

Before proceeding to state his reasons for opposing the measure, he first calls up his political touchstone, the doctrine of circumstances. "A statesman, never losing sight of principles, is to be guided by circumstances, and judging contrary to the exigencies of the moment, he may ruin his country forever."⁽²⁾

He returns to the same theme a moment later: "The first question a good statesman would ask himself, therefore, would be, how and in what circumstances do you find the society, and to act upon them."⁽³⁾ And again: "I has been so at all times; the

-
1. Works, Volume II, Page 96.
Burke To His Son Richard, March 23, 1792.
 2. Works, Volume VI, Page 101.
Speech On The Petition Of The Unitarians, 1792.
 3. Ibid. Page 103.

legislature, whether right or wrong, went no other way to work but by circumstances, times, and necessities. My mind marches the same road; my school is the practice and usage of parliament."⁽¹⁾

The argument is clear. Pleas for relief of the religious conscience he has always supported, but now the religious issue cannot be separated from the political issue. "As religion is one of the bonds of society, he (the civil magistrate) ought not to suffer it to be made the pretext of destroying its peace, order, liberty, and its security. Above all, he ought strictly to look to it when men begin to form new combinations, to be distinguished by new names, and especially when they mingle a political system with their religious opinions, true or false, plausible or implausible."⁽²⁾

He then proceeds to show the real aims of these who are applying for relief, and this is his clearest statement that what was once a religious group has been transformed into a political faction that threatens the overthrow of both church and state. "This faction are not confined to a theological sect, but are also a political faction. First, as theological, we are to show, that they do not aim at the quiet enjoyment of their own liberty, but are associated for the express purpose of proselytism. In proof of this first proposition, read their primary association. Second, that their purpose of proselytism is to collect a multitude sufficient by force and violence to

1. Works, Volume VI, Page 104.
Speech On The Petition Of The Unitarians, 1792.

2. Ibid. Page 103.

overturn the church...Third, that the designs against the church are concurrent with a design to subvert the state... on what model they intend to build, that it is the French."⁽¹⁾

In the face of such formidable charges, the cause was lost and Fox's power further delimited. A pamphleteer of the era wrote, "Now the Dissenters are farther from their point than ever, and Mr. Fox is not much nearer the Ministry."⁽²⁾ In the same year, Burke wrote a letter to Grenville, in which he reiterated the danger he had spoken of on the floor of Commons:

"I am thoroughly convinced that the action of the English Jacobins, though a little under a cloud for the present, is neither destroyed nor disheartened. The fire is still alive under the ashes. Every encouragement, direct or indirect, given to their brethern in France, stirs and animates the embers. So sure as we have an existence, if these things should go on in France, as go on they may, so sure it is, that in the ripeness of their time, the same tragedies will be acted in England.

Carra, and Condorcet, and Santerre, and Manuel, and Petion, and their brethern the Priestleys, the Coopers, and the Watts -- the deputies of the body of the Dissenters and others at Manchester who embraced Carra in the midst of the Jacobin club; the revolution society that received Petion in London; the whole race of the affiliated, who are numerous and powerful, whose principles, dispositions, and wishes are the very same, are as closely connected as ever." ⁽³⁾

With the outbreak of the war, any political measure for the relief of Dissenters was out of the question. The country at large had not made a distinction between the more radical of their number and the rank and file. The mob spirit had prevented any calm appraisal of their claims. So violent was Burke's reaction to the Revolution in France that he could scarcely make

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 104-105.
Speech On The Petition Of The Unitarians.
 2. Lincoln, Op. Cit., Page 268.
 3. Works, Volume II, Page 124.
Burke to Lord Grenville, August 18, 1792.

a fair judgment on a religious group which found anything of value in what was taking place across the channel. Indeed, it is an open question as to what Burke's attitude toward the Dissenters would have been if the Revolution had been delayed beyond his lifetime, since, in a sense, every grant to dissent weakened the case of the establishment. Cook seems to feel this problem when, commenting on Burke's whole political philosophy, he says: "Indeed for Dissenters to desire an equality with the church was in itself a challenge to the state and a work of hidden disloyalty, since the two were grown together in a mystical fusion: such a challenge was a blow at continuity and a threat of revolution...he (Burke) increasingly feared the destructiveness of dissent."⁽¹⁾

There is a significant passage in the Reflections which will be useful to those who wish to defend Burke against the charge of inconsistency in his attitude toward dissent. At the very close of that work he describes himself as "one who wishes to preserve consistency, but who would preserve consistency by varying his means to secure the unity of his end."⁽²⁾ Certainly in every change of attitude toward dissent he was always careful to hold up the end which to him was paramount, the security of the state and of the established church.

-
1. Thomas I. Cook, History of Political Philosophy, Page 692.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 355.
Reflections.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ATTITUDE OF BURKE TOWARD THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Burke's untiring efforts in behalf of Catholic Emancipation characterized his career from beginning to end. This consistent championing of the Roman Catholic cause is probably as equally well known in the popular mind as his relation to the Hastings affair, and every scholarly study of Burke's thought puts the Catholic question among the very first of his life-long concerns. Any detailed examination of his writings and speeches on the problem would run far beyond the scope of this study.⁽¹⁾ The endeavour in this chapter will be to trace Burke's relation to the most significant events relating to the relief of Roman Catholics which occurred during his lifetime, and to discover his evaluation of certain aspects of the Roman Catholic Church, aside from the political problem of obtaining relief for adherents of that faith.

From the events of his boyhood which were surveyed in chapter one, it is evident that there was an early emotional conditioning of his sympathetic attitude toward Roman Catholics. Burke was deeply attached to his mother, who was a devout Catholic. He lived for several years in the home of his grandparents in

-
1. Matthew Arnold's collection of Burke's letters, speeches, and tracts on the Irish question alone runs to over four hundred pages. It is still the best single volume in which to trace Burke's attitude, not only toward Irish Affairs, but toward the whole Roman Catholic question.

Matthew Arnold, Edmund Burke On Irish Affairs, 1881, London, MacMillan & Co.

County Cork, where he attended a Catholic village school. His sister was reared in the Catholic faith. To these family ties may be added the full force of his romantic attachment to his native land of Ireland and his conviction that the Catholic question lay at the bottom of most of the troubles of that distressed country. If any single piece of his writing were to be taken for a comprehensive view of his attitude toward the problem, it would probably be the open Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe, which Burke had published in 1792. In summarizing his views in that letter he wrote: "Since I could think at all, those have been my thoughts. You know that thirty-two years ago they were as fully matured in my mind as they are now."⁽¹⁾ His zeal in the cause of Catholic relief never slackened, and no reputable scholar has ever charged him with any action inconsistent with the desire to secure that end.

It was while he was in Ireland in 1760 as secretary to William Gerard Hamilton that Burke began what was evidently intended to be a complete survey of the Irish Penal Laws. In these tracts his attack on the oppressive system contains nothing significantly different from what he was to repeat in later writings and speeches. Of these tracts some exist in

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 545.
Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, 1792.

This statement, and Burke's whole career, cast further doubt on the trustworthiness of the earliest biography of Burke which was written by McCormick in 1798, the year after Burke's death. McCormick cites as authentic an anecdote concerning Burke and his old Quaker schoolmaster, Abraham Shackleton, in which he quotes Burke as saying to Shackleton: "I really think that our establishments both in church and state will never be secure without an absolute extermination of the papists."

Charles McCormick, Memoirs of The Right Honorable Edmund Burke, Page 7.

fragmentary form, others are complete. The whole constitutes a commentary on the restrictive laws, with the plea that it was impolitic to continue to enforce such legislation against such a large body of people within the kingdom. "Ireland, after almost a century of persecution, is at this hour full of penalties, and full of Papists."⁽¹⁾

The Annual Register had come to the birth just one year before this, and Burke, who was solely responsible for the publication in its earliest years,⁽²⁾ saw that the Catholic question received a place in the first issue. "Amidst all this prosperity, poor Jack is hourly disturbed by the dread of popery. He wonders that some stricter laws are not made against papists, and is sometimes afraid that they are busy with French gold among the bishops and judges. He cannot believe that the non-jurors are so quiet for nothing; they must certainly be forming some plot for the establishment of popery."⁽³⁾

While Burke's sympathy for the Catholic cause had always been well-known, it was the legislation of 1778, repealing the law against the celebrating of the mass by Catholic priests and lifting certain restrictions against the acquiring of property by Catholics, which made him the target of those who could be

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 24.
Tracts On The Popery Laws.
 2. See footnote on page 9.
 3. The Annual Register, 1758, Page 370-371.
(Taken From The Idler).

rallied to the banner of "No Popery." To the more radical element, Burke's name became the symbol of evil incarnate, and a flood of protests came to him from all over the country.

(1)

From Scotland the Rev. John Erskine wrote to Burke to establish that he was not one of the leaders in what he styled "the unchristian and disorderly proceedings" against Roman Catholics in Edinburgh and Glasgow. He enclosed three pamphlets designed to show the moderation of his fellow-clergymen in their preaching and writing on the Catholic issue. To his overtures Burke replied:

"I could not justify to myself to give to the synagogue, the mosque, or the pagoda, the language which your pulpits (in Scotland) so liberally bestow upon a great part of the Christian world...If on this account people call me a Roman Catholic, it gives me not the smallest disturbance...

If I had the ability and wish for that purpose (of raising popular insurrections) I could not imagine anything more elaborately composed from all the resources of skill and eloquence, for the purpose of inflaming the minds of the people, than those writings you have sent me...To represent men as dangerous, immoral, perfidious, murderers, and professed enemies to the very foundations of human society, and then to desire us to do them no evil, is, under favour, rather a piece of very insulting pleasantry, than a serious admonition." (2)

If there was bitterness toward Burke north of the border, the letters which came to him from across the Irish Sea were filled with expressions of gratitude. "In consequence of an unanimous resolution at a meeting of the Roman Catholics, (in Dublin) I have the honour to remit you the inclosed bill on Mr. Thomas Gorman, London, for three hundred guineas, in part of a sum of five hundred they pray your acceptance of, as a mark of

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 390.
Rev. John Erskine to Burke, April 24, 1779.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 390-393.
Burke to Rev. John Erskine, April, 1779.

their gratitude for the many eminent services you have rendered their body."⁽¹⁾ But Burke replied: "I therefore beg leave to return you the bill as I received it...If I am so happy as to have contributed in the smallest degree to the relief of so large and respectable a part of my countrymen as the Roman Catholics of Ireland, from oppressions that I always thought not only very grievous to them, but very impolitic with regard to the state, I am more than enough rewarded."⁽²⁾

But the reaction to the relief given to the Catholics was not to be confined to the mobs of Edinburgh and Glasgow, or to the rejoicing of the Irish. In June of 1780 the Gordon Riots broke out in London. As we have seen earlier in this study, Burke's life was openly threatened, but he insisted on remaining in the city. On June 13 he wrote to Richard Shackleton:

"For four nights I kept watch at Lord Rockingham's, or Sir George Savile's, whose houses were garrisoned by a strong body of soldiers, together with numbers of true friends of the first rank, who were willing to share their danger. Savile-house, Rockingham-house, Devonshire-house, to be turned into garrisons! O tempora! We have all served the country for several years, some of us for near thirty, with fidelity, labour, and affection; and we are obliged to put ourselves under military protection for our houses and our persons."⁽³⁾

-
1. Works, Volume I, Page 402.
Anthony Dermott to Burke, August 9, 1779.
 2. Works, Volume I, Page 405.
Burke to Anthony Dermott, August 17, 1779.
 3. Works, Volume I, Page 434-435.
Burke to Richard Shackleton, June 13, 1780.

Burke spared neither the established church nor the Dissenters when he reviewed the causes of the rioting. There never was much thought to personal political expediency when he was referring to the Catholic question. "We ought to recollect the poison which, under the name of antidotes against Popery, and such like mountebank titles, has been circulated from our pulpits, and from our presses, from the heads of the Church of England, and the heads of the Dissenters."⁽¹⁾

For his part in the relief of the Catholics, Burke still had to reckon with his constituents at Bristol. We saw in chapter three that there were a number of reasons for the estrangement of Burke and Bristol, and among these, but by no means foremost, was Burke's attitude toward the Roman Catholic question. There are letters from correspondents in Bristol equally as vindictive in tone as those he received from Edinburgh. In his famous speech previous to the election in 1780, he brought up the thorny question, and gave even more offence to his critics. There had been an attempt made to repeal the relief legislation of 1778, and of it Burke said: "I laboured night and day, I laboured in parliament; I laboured out of parliament. If therefore the resolution of the House of Commons, refusing to commit this act of unmatched turpitude (repealing the relief act) be a crime, I am guilty among the foremost."⁽²⁾

Some of the voters who heard him that day were members of the Protestant Association, and Burke well knew it. Yet he

-
1. Works, Volume V, Page 581.
Some Thoughts On The Approaching Executions, 1780.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 437.
Speech Previous To The Election At Bristol, 1780.

employed language which seemed to be deliberately baiting his opponents. In defending the relief given to the Catholics, he said: "Was it to be delayed until a rabble in Edinburgh should dictate to the Church of England what measure of persecution was fitting for her safety? Was it to be adjourned until a fanatical force could be collected in London, sufficient to frighten us out of all our ideas of policy and justice? Were we to wait for the profound lectures on the reason of state, ecclesiastical and political, which the Protestant Association have since condescended to read to us?"⁽¹⁾ As we have seen, he did not even stand for reelection at Bristol, and thereafter sat for Malton.

Burke was of course elated when the Second Rockingham Administration recognized Irish Parliamentary independence in 1782. Writing of the event ten years later, he said: "The true revolution to you, that which most intrinsically and substantially resembled the English Revolution of 1688, was the Irish Revolution of 1782."⁽²⁾ Burke saw it as one more step toward Catholic Emancipation, but he had too sanguine hopes that the power of the Protestant junto in Ireland could be broken.

It was in 1790 that the chapter opened in Burke's relation to Catholic Emancipation from which he had the highest hopes. In that year his son, Richard, was appointed agent to the Irish Roman Catholics, though it was not until December of the following year that he actually went to Ireland. He proved so

-
1. Works, Volume III, Page 439.
Speech Previous To the Election At Bristol, 1780.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 529.
Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe, 1792.

inadequate for the position, and his conduct was so inept, that the Catholics were indeed glad when he returned to England. Still, the Catholic cause no doubt profited from Richard's presence. In spite of his own shortcomings, there was always a guiding hand on his shoulder and a plan of procedure before him, for his father now had the perfect opportunity to get his ideas put forward as though they were really Richard's. Within a month of Richard's arrival in Ireland, Burke wrote to him, expressing his confidence that the Catholics would be given the franchise and that full emancipation would speedily follow:

"They will have it, because the nature of things will do it. What vexes me is, that it will not be done in the best, the most gracious, the most conciliatory, and the most politic mode. In the present state of Europe in which the state of these kingdoms is included, it is of infinite moment that matters of grace should emanate from the old sovereign authority." (1)

Three days later he wrote to Richard again, expressly giving advice on how the Catholics should proceed:

"Let the individuals who sign the petition (if this mode should be adopted) modestly hint, that they appear before a body whose authority and competence they most cheerfully recognize, and to whose wisdom, benevolence, and justice they willingly submit; but that they have not the presumption to call them their representatives, in the whole or in any part...

They ought to notice the arts used to divide them; to calumniate their intentions; to represent them to be bad citizens because they aspire to be free subjects...

Their failure ought to be instantly followed with an address to the king, expressive of inviolable loyalty, &c., &c., and a bitter complaining (managed in the terms) of those whose calumnies have prevented them from any share in a constitutional and public mode of showing their good affections to the crown." (2)

1. Works, Volume II, Page 59.
Burke To His Son Richard, January 26, 1792.

2. Ibid. Page 75, January 29, 1792.

Other letters from Burke to his son are full of advice on how the Catholics should proceed. "I think they ought to be explicit...that they wish to subject their conduct to the strictest scrutiny, whether as loyal and affectionate subjects to the best of sovereigns, or as sober, peaceable, and useful members of society..."⁽¹⁾ No doubt these specific suggestions of the elder Burke were useful to the Catholics, but Richard proved so difficult to work with that they paid him two thousand guineas and released him as their agent.

Even after the Catholics had severed their connection with Richard, Burke wrote to him in Ireland, continuing to send advice for the Catholics, knowing that it would reach the right parties. "I wish the Catholics would let alone all expressions of limitation of their views and designs; they will always be taken at their word at the limitation...They have nothing to do, but to declare firmly and simply, that they have no designs whatever to alter the ecclesiastical, civil, or political establishment."⁽²⁾

It was in 1792 that Burke wrote what was perhaps the most influential of all his pieces on the Catholic question, the Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe, which was referred to earlier in this chapter. It was an open letter, and it received a wide circulation both in England and Ireland. Almost every point which Burke had made in his earlier writings appears here, and

-
1. Works, Volume II, Page 54.
Burke To His Son Richard, January 8, 1792.
 2. Ibid. Page 133.
Burke To His Son Richard, September, 1792.

it is probably the most fruitful single source for his views. Perhaps the argument of Burke's which is best known, because most often quoted, is this fine statement: "Our constitution is not made for great, general and proscriptive exclusions; sooner or later it will destroy them, or they will destroy the constitution."⁽¹⁾

Burke's historical mindedness comes forward again when he looks for the deeper roots of the troubles in Ireland. Here is his analysis to show that the problem is not simply one of religious differences: "The statutes of Kilkenny show that the spirit of the popery laws, and some even of their actual provisions, as applied between Englishry and Irishry, had existed in that harassed country before the words Protestant and Papist were heard of in the world."⁽²⁾ Ten years earlier he had made this point clear when he wrote: "It is injustice, and not mistaken conscience, that has been the principle of persecution,"⁽³⁾ at least as far as it has fallen under my observation." Now, in 1792, Burke is pleading for the admission of the Irish Catholics to the franchise, and almost all the arguments which he develops at great length can be found within the brief compass of the following passage:

"Since our oldest fundamental laws follow, or rather couple, freehold with franchise; since no principle of the Revolution shakes these liberties; since the oldest of one of the best monuments of the constitution demands for the Irish the privilege which they supplicate;

-
1. Works, Volume IV, Page 515.
Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe, 1792.
 2. Ibid. Page 527-528.
 3. Works, Volume IV, Page 505.
A Letter To A Peer In Ireland, 1782.

since the principles of the Revolution coincide with the declarations of the Great Charter;

Since the practice of the Revolution, in this point, did not contradict its principles; since, from that event, twenty-five years had elapsed, before a domineering party, on a party principle, had ventured to disfranchise, without any proof whatsoever of abuse, the greater part of the community;

Since the king's coronation oath does not stand in his way to the performance of his duty to all his subjects; (1) since you have given to all other dissenters these privileges without limit which are hitherto withheld, without any limitation whatsoever, from the Catholics; since no nation in the world has ever been known to exclude so great a body of men (not born slaves) from the civil state, and all the benefits of its constitution, the whole question comes before Parliament as a matter for its prudence." (2)

When, therefore, the Catholic Relief Bill became law in 1793, it was generally agreed that Burke's open letter to Langrishe had been influential in bringing the matter to pass. By its provisions the Irish Catholics received the parliamentary franchise, the right to bear arms, to serve on grand juries, and other measures of relief. Burke himself saw this as bringing one step nearer the day of complete emancipation of the Catholics, and he believed that final day of deliverance to be not far distant. But before we turn to the Fitzwilliam episode from which Burke expected so much, and which turned out to be such a grievous disappointment to him, there is an exchange of correspondence in 1793 which throws much light on Burke's

-
1. George III had hitherto consistently taken refuge in the coronation oath.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 539.
Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, 1792.

views on the relation between England and the Vatican.(1)

Pope Pius VI had read Burke's Reflections, and Sir John Coxe Hippisley wrote to Burke from Rome, describing the pope's reaction. "Your book is as well known at the Vatican as at St. James's, and I am sure the just tribute of praise which his Holiness has given to it you will accept with the more pleasure as it is a strong proof of the liberality of his sentiments."⁽²⁾

Burke, being as vulnerable to praise as he was sensitive to criticism, no doubt enjoyed receiving this commendation from the head of the Roman Catholic Church. He replied to Hippisley: "Nobody can be so squeamish as to refuse benefits (nothing else will ever be offered by his Holiness) because they come from the Pope. He would be an admiral of perhaps wonderful Theological Talent but of not quite such splendid military qualities, who would scruple the receipt of trade Indulgences called Munitions de Guerre et de Bouche, from a Prince Prelate that believes in Purgatory."⁽³⁾

The British fleet had been provisioned in Italy, and no doubt Burke was seeing the Vatican as a bulwark against the revolutionary principles which in his mind threatened not only England

-
1. Froude makes this observation: "He (Burke) had denounced the Irish Penal Laws as without example for inhumanity and cruelty...although the laws against Protestants in Papal Italy and Spain were more cruel by far than the laws in Ireland against Catholics." J.A.Froude, The English in Ireland, Volume III, Page 23.
 2. J.C.Hippisley To Burke, September 18, 1793, from Rome. The Milton MSS Collection, now at Lamport Hall.
 3. Burke To J.C.Hippisley, October 3, 1793. The Correspondence of Edmund Burke and William Windham, Page 63.

but all civilization. In the same letter from Burke to Hippiisley, there appears this very revealing passage:

"I confess, I would, if the matter rested with me, enter into much more distinct and avowed political connections with the Court of Rome than hitherto we have held. If we decline them, the bigotry will be on our part, and not on that of his Holiness.

Some mischief has happened, and much good has, I am convinced, been prevented, by our unnatural allienation. If the present state of the world has not taught us better things, our error is very much our fault.

This good correspondence could not begin more auspiciously than in the person of the present Soverign Pontiff who unites the Royal and Sacerdotal characters with advantage and lustre to both." (1)

In reply to Burke's letter, indicating his admiration for Pius VI and his desire for closer political connections with the Vatican, Hippiisley wrote: "Your just and pathetic eulogium on the merits of the Soverign Pontiff and your private opinion so favorable to the good policy of restoring an equitable communication with these States, must be received with pleasure and gratitude." (2) This exchange of correspondence which has just

-
1. Burke To J. C. Hippiisley, October 3, 1793.
The Correspondence of Edmund Burke and William Windham,
Page 63.

This very important letter is among the Wentworth Woodhouse MSS now at Sheffield. It was published with errors in transcription in the Burke-Windham correspondence cited above.

H. V. F. Somerset, writing in the Dublin Review for March, 1933, quotes at length from this letter, and refers to it as not having been published previously.

Likewise Dixon Wecter, in his very excellent study, Edmund Burke and His Kinsmen, page 4, refers to this letter as being "hitherto unpublished."

This would indicate that neither Somerset nor Wecter had investigated The Burke-Windham Correspondence, a very basic source for any scholarly study of Burke.

2. J. C. Hippiisley To Burke, November 2, 1793, from Rome.
The Milton MSS Collection, now at Lamport Hall.

recently come to light, reveals how far Burke was willing to go in 1793, and it was probably just as well for the peace of his last years that those who thought him a Jesuit never saw these letters to Rome.

In 1794 Fitzwilliam became Viceroy of Ireland. Fitzwilliam was openly in favor of Catholic Emancipation, and Burke thought he could foresee the labor of his whole lifetime on behalf of Irish Catholics would soon be victoriously culminated. In the same year his son Richard was elected to parliament for Malton. No two interests were dearer Burke's heart than his affection for his son and his passionate desire for Emancipation. Within a year Richard was in his grave, and Fitzwilliam had been recalled. Richard's death crushed Burke, and of the Fitzwilliam episode he wrote to Sir Hercules Langrishe:

"My sanguine hopes are blasted, and I must consign my feelings on that terrible disappointment to the same patience in which I have been obliged to bury the vexation I suffered on the defeat of the other great, just, and honorable causes, in which I have had some share, and which have given more of dignity, than of peace and advantage to a long laborious life." (1)

Fitzwilliam's going to Ireland had aroused not only in Burke but also in the rank and file of Irish Catholics the confident hope that Emancipation was finally at hand. When it did not come to pass, the deep bitterness and the old hatreds came more and more into the open. From this point the situation deteriorated toward the Rebellion of 1798, which Burke, who died in 1797, was spared from witnessing.

1. Works, Volume VI, Page 47-48.
Second Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe,
May 26, 1795.

This concludes our survey of Burke's attitude toward the leading events connected with the Catholic question, and the role he played in advocating measures of relief. The public record could simply stand as the work of a liberal-minded Protestant of the Church of England who was zealous for the welfare of his native Ireland, and who believed it impolitic to continue the oppressive measures against a large body of the body politic. However, when we go further into his thought, we see how sympathetic Burke was toward the Roman Catholic Church as such.

It is true that the record shows favorable comment on the Reformation, and even a declared zeal for Protestantism. Referring to the former in 1772, Burke said he would "have heartily concurred in the alteration at that time made."⁽¹⁾ At Bristol in 1780 he referred to "The Reformation, one of the greatest periods of human improvement."⁽²⁾ And in the Reflections, which was of course written as much for English readers as for Europeans, he inserted this sentence: "We are Protestants, not from indifference, but from zeal."⁽³⁾

Over against these public declarations must be set down the following expressions which reveal that Burke never really grasped the religious ethos of Protestantism. Writing to his son Richard he said: "We sometimes hear of a Protestant religion, frequently of a Protestant interest. We hear of the latter the

-
1. Speeches, Volume I, Page 100.
Speech On The Clerical Petition, 1772.
 2. Works, Volume III, Page 423.
Speech Previous To the Election At Bristol, 1780.
 3. Works, Volume IV, Page 225.
Reflections.

most frequently because it has a positive meaning. The other has none."⁽¹⁾ Here Burke is stating privately that the expression "Protestant religion" has no positive meaning for him. In the Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe there appears this loose and irresponsible use of terms: "A man is certainly the most perfect Protestant, who protests against the whole Christian religion."⁽²⁾ That is indeed a promiscuous use of language which Burke never permitted himself when speaking of the Roman Catholic Church.

When one turns to a consideration of Burke's attitude toward the clergy of the two faiths there always appears a note of profound admiration for those of the Roman Catholic Church. He certainly held them in higher regard than he did the clergy of his own established church. "That religion (the Protestant) having little hold on the minds of people by external ceremonies, and extraordinary observances, or separate habits of living, the clergy make up the deficiency by cultivating their minds with all kinds of ornamental learning, which the liberal provision made in England for the parochial clergy (to say nothing of the ample church preferments, with little or no duties annexed) and the comparative lightness of parochial duties, enables the greater part of them in some considerable degree to accomplish... It is not necessary to observe that all these things are, however, collateral to their function, and that except in preaching,

-
1. Works, Volume VI, Page 58.
Burke To His Son Richard, undated.
 2. Works, Volume IV, Page 521.
Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe, 1792.

which may be and is supplied, and often best supplied, out of printed books, little else is necessary for a protestant minister, than to be able to read the English language; I mean for the exercise of his function, not to the qualification of his admission to it."⁽¹⁾

While this is not an anti-Protestant pronouncement, still it should be contrasted with the following passage in which he lauds the discipline and authority of the Catholic Church and its clergy, over against the individualism of the clergy of the established church:

"No Roman Catholic priest can make a pleasing discovery to his congregation. He and his congregation are bound by the authority of their whole Church in all times and in all countries, whose general and collective authority infinitely lessens the individual authority of every private pastor, as the strictness of other laws lessens the power of individual magistrates.

"Whereas most of us, who examine critically, full as little as any of them, and for the greater part think less about it, and are indeed incapable of doing so, we do and must receive our doctrine from our priest, who himself is not bound up to anything beyond his own ideas." (2)

In this passage Burke simply fails to grasp the catholicity of the Anglican communion as being in the main stream of classical Christianity when he says of the priest in the established church that he "is not bound up to anything beyond his own ideas."

Burke's notebook reveals that there were other motifs in the Roman Catholic Church which certainly had a strong appeal for him. "The Roman Catholic Religion must be brought into a country by very gradual means. There is an order, discipline,

1. Works, Volume IV, Page 500-501.
Letter To A Peer In Ireland, 1782.

2. Works, Volume II, Page 143.
Burke To His Son Richard, September 29, 1792.

and policy in it that does not suit with a sudden and tumultuous proceeding. The Protestant on the contrary must be introduced suddenly because it ought to have the force of novelty and lay hold on the enthusiastick part of the mind."⁽¹⁾ Those concepts of "order," "discipline," and "policy" were certainly fundamental to Burke's political as well as to his religious vocabulary.

Another passage from the notebook reveals this much too neat distinction between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant religion. "The advantages of order are not glaring but when perceived are closely adhered to, and one new convert is a greater strength to these (Roman Catholics) than so to the others. Of Papist to be a Protestant, it is only necessary to throw off something, for Protestant to become Papist something must be assumed."⁽²⁾ Here again Burke is giving a positive content to the word "Papist" which he confesses he was never able to give to the term "Protestant."

Perhaps the highest tribute Burke could pay to any church, he reserved for the Roman Catholic when he wrote to Dr. Hussey at Maynooth Catholic Seminary in 1795: "I wish very much to see, before my death, an image of a primitive Christian Church. With little improvements, I think the Roman Catholic Church of Ireland very capable of exhibiting that state of things."⁽³⁾

-
1. An essay entitled, "Scattered Hints Concerning Philosophy And Learning Collected From My Papers." Contained in the notebook kept by Edmund and William Burke. The Wentworth Woodhouse MSS Collection, now at Sheffield.
 2. Ibid. (the same essay).
 3. Works, Volume II, Page 280.
Burke To Dr. Hussey, February 27, 1795.

The material in this chapter has provided documentation for Froude's classic judgment of Burke, and with it we bring our study to a close. "Burke was not himself a Catholic, but as little was he a Protestant. His sympathies were with the old faith. His most intimate friends were Catholics to the end, and at the end even more than at the beginning."⁽¹⁾

1. J. A. Froude, The English In Ireland,
Volume III, Page 23.

13.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following is not an exhaustive bibliography. It contains only those entries which the writer considered to be most helpful in obtaining an adequate grasp of the subject of the thesis.

Abbey, C. J. and Overton, J. H.
The English Church In The Eighteenth Century.
1878. London.

Adams, H. P. (ed.)
Reflections On The Revolution In France.
1927. London.

Albemarle, George T.
Memoirs Of The Marquis Of Rockingham And
His Contemporaries. 1852. London.

Annual Register, The.
Especially the volumes for the year 1758-1766.

Arnold, Matthew.
Letters, Speeches, And Tracts On Irish
Affairs By Edmund Burke. 1881. London.

Barker, Ernest.
Burke And Bristol. (The Lewis Fry Memorial
Lectures, 1930-31). Bristol.

Baumann, A. A.
Burke The Founder Of Conservatism.
1929. London.

Becker, C. D.
The Heavenly City Of The Eighteenth Century
Philosophers. 1932. New Haven, Connecticut.

Beckett, J. C.
Protestant Dissent In Ireland, 1687-1780.
1948. London.

Bissett, Robert.
Life Of Edmund Burke. II vols.
1800. London.

Blackstone, Sir William.
Commentaries On The Laws Of England. 4 vols.
1906. New York.

- Bogue, David, and Bennett, James.
The History Of Dissenters. II Vols. 1833.
London.
- Bolingbroke, Henry St. John.
Letters On The Spirit of Patriotism and
Letters On The Idea of A Patriot King.
1749. London.
- Boswell, James.
Life Of Samuel Johnson. (G. Birkbeck Hill
Edition). VI Vols. 1887. Oxford.
- Boswell, James.
Letters. (Ed. by Tinker). II Vols.
1924. Oxford.
- Brailsford, H.
Shelley, Godwin, And Their Circle.
1914. London.
- Brickel, A. G.
"Cardinal Newman And Edmund Burke"
Catholic World. August, 1919.
- Brown, P. A.
The French Revolution In English History.
1918. London.
- Brown, P. Hume
History of Scotland. III Vols.
1909. Cambridge.
- Buckle, H. T.
History Of Civilization In England. III vols.
1903. London.
- Burke, Peter.
The Wisdom And Genius Of Edmund Burke.
1845. London.
- Burke, Edmund.
- I. Works.
- (a). The Works And Correspondence Of
The Right Honourable Edmund Burke.
VIII Volumes. 1852. (Rivington).
London. (Supplemented by the Bonn
edition).

Works...Cont'd.

- (b). The Speeches Of Edmund Burke In The House Of Commons And In Westminster Hall. IV Volumes. 1816. London.
- (c). Parliamentary History, The Annual Register, E. J. Payne's Select Works Of Burke, Matthew Arnold's selections on Burke And Irish Affairs, and many other such works listed as separate entries elsewhere in this bibliography.

II. Correspondence.

- (a). Volumes I and II of the Rivington edition of Burke's Works, cited above, contain the Burke correspondence originally referred to as The Fitzwilliam Correspondence.
- (b). Correspondence Of The Right Honourabel Edmund Burke And Dr. French Laurence. 1827. London.
- (c). Correspondence of Edmund Burke And William Windham. (Ed. J. P. Gilson). 1910. Cambridge.
- (d). The Wentworth Woodhouse MS collection, now at the Sheffield Public Library.
- (e). The Milton MS collection, now at Lamport Hall.
- (f). The Burke MS at The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City.
- (g). The Burke MS at The National Library of Ireland, Dublin.
- (h). The Rockingham MS collection, now at the Sheffield Public Library.
- (i). The Burke MS at Trinity College Library, Dublin.
- (j). The Burke MS at The Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Correspondence...Cont'd.

- (k). The Burke MS at The Firestone Memorial Library, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.
- (l). Leadbeater, Mary.
The Leadbeater Papers. II Volumes.
1862. London.
- (m). Hardy, Francis.
Memoirs Of The Life Of The Earl Of Charlemont. II Vols. 1812. London.
- (n). Minto, Countess Of.
Life And Letters Of Sir Gilbert Elliott, First Earl Of Minto.
III Vols. 1874. London.
- (o). In addition to the above sources, there are Burke letters in all the standard biographies which are listed as separate entries in this bibliography. Of these the most valuable sources are probably those by Magnus, Prior and Samuels.
- (p). Another fruitful source has been the biographies and memoirs of other leading figures of the period, such as Fox's Memoirs, Albemarle's Rockingham, Francis' Memoirs, etc.

Note: Prof. T. W. Copeland of the University of Chicago has been most helpful to the writer in tracing Burke's correspondence. Professor Copeland is preparing a complete bibliography of Burke's letters which should prove invaluable to students in this field.

Burney, Fanny.

Diary And Letters of Madame D'Arblay. VII Vols.
1842. London.

Fanny Burney And Her Friends. (Ed. Seeley).
London.

Cambridge History Of English Literature.
Volume XI, The Period Of The French Revolution.
1914. Cambridge.

Cambridge Modern History.
Volume VIII, The French Revolution.
1904. Cambridge.

Carre, A.
L'Influence Des Huguenots Francais En Irelande
Aux XVIIe Et XVIIIe Siecles. 1937. Paris.

Clark, Henry W.
History Of English Non-Conformity. II Vols.
1913. London.

Cobban, Alfred.
"Edmund Burke And The Origins Of The Theory Of
Nationality." Cambridge Historical Journal,
Volume II. 1926.

Edmund Burke And The Revolt Against The
Eighteenth Century. 1929. London.

Rousseau And The Modern State. 1934. London.

Colum, P.
"Burke And The Present Order." Saturday Review
Of Literature. September 30, 1933.

Conway, M. D.
The Life of Thomas Paine. 1909. London.

Coomer, Duncan.
English Dissent Under The Early Hanoverians.
1946. London.

Cook, T. I.
History Of Political Philosophy From Plato To
Burke. 1936. New York.

Copeland, Thomas W.
"Burke And Dodsley's Annual Register."
Publication Of The Modern Language Association
Of America. March, 1939.

"Burke's Vindication of Natural Society."
Library Journal. March, 1938.

Curtis, Edmund, and McDowell, R. B.
Irish Historical Documents. (1172-1922).
1943. London.

- de Castro, J. Paul.
The Gordon Riots. 1926. London.
- Depont, M.
Answer To The Reflections Of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke. 1791. London.
- Dixon, W. M.
Trinity College, Dublin. 1902. London.
- Dunn, W. C.
"Adam Smith And Edmund Burke"
Southern Economic Journal. January, 1941.
- Einaudi, Mario.
"The British Background Of Burke's Political Philosophy." Political Science Quarterly.
Vol. 49. December, 1934.
- Elton, Oliver.
A Survey Of English Literature - 1730-1780.
II Vols. 1928. London.
- Farington, Joseph.
Diary. Vol. I. (Ed. Grieg). 1923. London.
- Fox, Charles J.
Memoirs And Correspondence. II Vols. (Ed. Lord John Russell). 1853. London.
- Francis, Sir Philip.
Memoirs. II Vols. (Ed. Parkes and Merivale).
1867. London.
- Froude, J. A.
The English In Ireland In The Eighteenth Century. III Vols. 1887. London.
- George III.
Correspondence. VI Vols.
(Ed. Fortescue). 1928. London.
- Gibson, ---.
"An Account Of A Conversation Between The Right Honourable Edmund Burke And The Right Rev. Dr. Gibson." Church Pamphlets, 1838-1843.
Vol. IV. National Library of Scotland.
- Graham, William.
English Political Philosophy From Hobbes To Maine. 1899. London.

- Green, John Richard.
History Of The English People. Vols. V-VIII.
1896. London.
- Guedella, Philip.
"Mr. Burke And The Grand Manner."
The Nation. January 30, 1926.
- Gwynn, D.
"To The Beginners The Glory: Edmund Burke
And Catholic Emancipation."
Catholic World. January, 1929.
- Hackney College Sermons (1786-1791).
(A collection of sermons by Price, Priestly,
Kippis, et al.)
- Halevy, Elie.
The Growth Of Philosophic Radicalism.
Translated by Mary Morris. 1928. London.
- Halliday Pamphlets, The.
The Royal Irish Academy. Dublin.
- Hearnshaw, F. J. C.
The Social And Political Ideas Of Some
Representative Thinkers Of The Revolutionary
Era. 1931. London.
- Conservatism In England. 1933. London.
- Some Great Political Idealists Of The
Christian Era. 1937. London.
- Hughes, A. M. D.
Edmund Burke. (Selections, with essays by
Hazlitt, Arnold, and others.) 1930. Oxford.
- Hull, Eleanor.
A History Of Ireland And Her People. Vol. II.
Dublin.
- Hume, David.
The Letters Of David Hume. II Vols.
(Ed. Grieg). 1932. Oxford.
- Hunt, William.
The History Of England From The Accession Of
George III To The Close Of Pitt's First
Administration. Volume X of "The Political
History Of England." 1905. London.

- Hutchins, R. M.
"Theory Of The State: Edmund Burke."
Review of Politics. April, 1943.
- Jordan, W. K.
The Development Of Religious Toleration In
England. Vol. IV. 1940. Cambridge, Mass.
- Keir, D. L.
The Constitutional History Of Modern Britain.
1938. London.
- Kippis, Andrew.
Hackney College Sermons, 1786-1791.
1806. London.
- Laski, Harold J.
Letters Of Edmund Burke. (Ed. and Introd. by
Laski). "The World's Classics Series."
1922. Oxford.
- Parliamentary Government In England.
1938. London.
- "Edmund Burke." (Address At Bi-Centenary Of
The Founding Of The Historical Society Of
Trinity College, Dublin). 1947. Dublin.
- Leadbeater Papers, The.
II Vols. (Containing The Annals of Ballitore
by Mary Leadbeater and Correspondence Between
Edmund Burke and Richard Shackleton).
1862. London.
- Lecky, William E. H.
A History Of England In The Eighteenth
Century. VIII Vols. 1883. London.
- A History Of Ireland In The Eighteenth
Century. V Vols. 1892. London.
- Lincoln, Anthony.
Some Political And Social Ideas Of English
Dissent, 1763-1800. 1938. Cambridge.
- Locke, John.
Letters On Toleration. 1689. London.
- Lodge, Richard.
The History Of England From The Restoration
To The Death Of William III. 1910. London.

- MacCunn, John.
The Political Philosophy Of Burke.
1913. London.
- Magnus, Sir Philip.
Edmund Burke, A Life Portrait. 1939. London.
- MacIver, R. M.
The Modern State. 1926. London.
- M'Cormick, Charles.
Memoirs Of Edmund Burke. 1798. London.
- McDowell, R. B.
Irish Public Opinion, 1750-1800. 1943. London.
- Minto, Countess of.
Life And Letters Of Sir Gilbert Elliott,
First Earl Of Minto. III Vols. 1874. London.
- Moon, Penderel.
Warren Hastings And British India.
1947. London.
- Morley, John.
Edmund Burke, A Historical Study. 1867. London

"Edmund Burke." Encyclopedia Britannica.
Eleventh Edition. Volume IV.

Edmund Burke. "English Men Of Letters Series."
1906. London.
- Murray, Robert H.
Edmund Burke. 1931. Oxford.
- Namier, L. B.
The Structure Of Politics At The Accession Of
George III. II Vols. 1929. London.

England In The Age Of The American Revolution.
1930. London.

In The Margin Of History. 1939. London.
- Newman, Bertram.
Edmund Burke. 1927. London.
- O'Brien, R. Barry.
Two Centuries Of Irish History. 1907. London.

- O'Brien, William.
Edmund Burke As An Irishman. 1924. Dublin.
- Osborn, Annie M.
Rousseau And Burke. 1940. London.
- Overton, J. H.
The Church In England. II. Vols.
1897. London.
- Overton, J. H. and Relton, F.
The English Church From The Accession Of
George I To The End Of The Eighteenth Century.
1906. London.
- Paine, Thomas.
Complete Writings. (Ed. Foner). 1945. New York.
- Pankhurst, Edward A.
Edmund Burke, A Study Of His Life And Character.
1886. London.
- Parliamentary History.
Vols. XVI-XXXI. (1766-1794). 1813-1818. London.
- Payne, E. J.
Burke, Select Works. III Vols. 1877, 1878, 1892,
Oxford.
- Phillips, Walter Alison.
History Of The Church Of Ireland. Vol. III.
1933. London.
- Pillans, T. Dundas.
Edmund Burke. 1905. London.
- Pitt, William.
Parliamentary Speeches. III Vols. 1806. London.
- Priestly, Joseph.
Letters To The Right Honourable Edmund Burke
Occasioned By His Reflections On The French
Revolution. 1791. Birmingham.
- Prior, James.
Edmund Burke. (Third Edition). 1839. London.
- Raffety, F. W.
"Edmund Burke And America From A British Point
of View." Living Age. June 12, 1920.
- Robertson, C. G.
England Under The Hanoverians. 1911. London.

- Rogers, A. K.
"Burke's Social Philosophy." American Journal
Of Sociology. Vol. XVIII.
- Rousseau, Jean J.
The Political Writings Of Rousseau.
(ed. C. E. Vaughan). II Vols. 1915.
- Sabine, G. H.
A History Of Political Theory. 1937. London.
- Samuels, Arthur P. I.
The Early Life, Correspondence, And Writings
Of Edmund Burke. 1923. Cambridge.
- Scott, R.
Burke's Reflections On The French Revolution.
1910. Bombay.
- Scudi, Abbie Turner.
The Sacheverell Affair. 1939. London.
- See, Henri.
La Vie Economique Et Les Classes Sociales En
France Au XVIIIe Siecle. 1924. Paris.
- Selbie, W. B.
Nonconformity, Its Origin And Progress.
London.
- Smith, H. F. R.
The Theory Of Religious Liberty In The Reign
Of Charles II And James II. 1910. Cambridge.
- Somerset, H. V. F.
"New Light On Edmund Burke." Discovery.
Vol. XIII, December, 1932.
- "Edmund Burke, England, And The Papacy."
The Dublin Review, March, 1938.
- Somerville, Thomas.
My Own Life And Time, (1741-1814).
1861. Edinburgh.
- Stephen, Leslie.
History Of English Thought In The Eighteenth
Century. II Vols. 1876. London.
- Strylenski, Casimir.
The Eighteenth Century. "National History of
France" Series. 1916. London.

- Sutherland, L. S.
"Burke And The First Rockingham Ministry."
English Historical Review. Volume XLVII.
January, 1932.
- Sykes, Norman.
Church And State In England In The
Eighteenth Century. 1934. Cambridge.
- Tarr, H. A.
"Builders Of American Democracy."
Scholastic. October 7, 1940.
- Test And Corporation Acts, The.
(A collection of sermons, essays, letters,
etc., on the subject).
Dr. Williams' Library. London.
- Trevelyan, G. O.
The Early History Of Charles James Fox.
1880. London.

The American Revolution. 1905. London.
- Trevelyan, George M.
British History In The Nineteenth Century.
1922. London.

Blenheim, (England Under Queen Ann).
1930. London.

English Social History. 1944. London.
- Tunstall, Brian.
William Pitt, Earl of Chatham. 1938. London.
- Turberville, A. S.
English Men And Manners In The Eighteenth
Century. 1926. Oxford.

The House Of Lords In The Eighteenth Century.
1927. Oxford.

Johnson's England. II Vols. 1933. Oxford.
- Vaughan, C. E.
Burke's Reflections On The French Revolution.
1892. London.

Studies In The History Of Political Philosophy.
II Vols. 1939. Manchester.

- Veitch, G. S.
The Genesis Of Parliamentary Reform.
1913. London.
- Walpole, Horace.
Memoirs Of The Reign Of King George The Third.
IV Vols.
- Warbourton, W.
The Alliance Between Church And State.
Fourth Edition. 1766. London.
- Weare, G. E.
Edmund Burke's Connection With Bristol.
1894. Bristol.
- Wecter, Dixon.
"The Missing Years In Edmund Burke's Biography."
Publication Of The Modern Language Association
Of America. Vol. LIII, December 1948.
- Edmund Burke And His Kinsmen (A Study Of The
Statesman's Financial Integrity And Private
Relationships). 1939. Boulder, Colorado.
- Willey, Basil.
The Life Of William Pitt, Earl Of Chatham.
II Vols. 1913. London.
- Stanhope, A Study in Eighteenth Century War
And Diplomacy. 1932. Oxford.
- The Whig Supremacy, (1714-1760). 1939. Oxford.
- The Eighteenth Century Background. 1940. London.
- Williams, A. T. P.
The Anglican Tradition In The Life Of England.
1947. London.
- Williams, The Library of Dr.---.
This library at 14 Gordon Square, London, is an
invaluable source for the study of the eighteenth
century church. In addition to works investigated
there which are treated as separate entries in
this bibliography, there is an extensive collec-
tion of sermons, tracts, and pamphlets not
available in any other form. In this particular
study the material in the Williams Library was
most helpful in the preparation of the chapter on
Burke's attitude toward the dissenting churches.

Winstanley, D. A.

Personal And Party Government.

1910. Cambridge.

Lord Chatham And The Whig Opposition.

1912. Cambridge.

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

One blustery March afternoon the writer was standing in Arran Quay, the street in Dublin where Burke was born.

A sober-faced man of middle years came down the street and paused to observe the foreigner who was obviously searching for an address. The following conversation ensued:

The Writer: "Can you tell me where Burke's home stood?"

The Native: "Oo did ye say?"

The Writer: "Burke, sir, Edmund Burke."

The Native: "Oo was 'ee?"

The Writer: "Burke? Why, he was one of your greatest Irishmen."

The Native: "'Twould be a matter for opinion."

*